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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A BOWER OF BLISS.]

TWICE REJECTED;

OR,

THE NAMELESS ONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Baronet's Son," "Who Did It?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In each others arms breathe out the tender tale.

THE library of Castle Loraine—such an apartment as may be found in most of the "stately homes" of England; rich in oak carvings and old pictures and priceless books, and with chairs and reading-desks and writing-tables to make study luxurious—was, on a glorious October morning, the scene of a momentous interview between the Earl of Deloraine—owner of the mansion—and his guest, the young Marquis of Mayfield. And the grave dignity of the elder, and the eager, confident, yet questioning air of the younger of the two noblemen gave a shrewd idea of the subject of the conversation.

"Am I to understand from you, Lord Mayfield, that my daughter Leila is aware of and returns the attachment you have done her the honour to express?" asked Lord Deloraine, with irritating calmness.

"I hope—I believe so," replied the marquis,

eagerly. "Lady Leila rather implied than spoke her permission to apply to you, my lord; but still I have not much fear of her consent, and," he added, proudly, "I hope I need not anticipate any difficulty on your part."

The earl listened with unmoved composure to the young man's agitated, impatient utterance.

"I understand your meaning, my young friend," he said, at last. "You imply that you are in every respect the equal of my daughter, and may fairly expect me to accept you as a son-in-law without hesitation. But the facts of the case, so far as my family politics and wishes are concerned, make any such arrangement rather a pain than pleasure to me."

"You mean that you do not wish to part with Lady Leila? Of course it is a sorrow where an only child is in question," said the marquis, in a soothing tone; "but still it is only a natural necessity, my dear lord."

"You are in a degree right. But Leila is not only an only child, but born under rather peculiar circumstances. Lady Deloraine and I had been afflicted by the loss of three infants, not one of whom had survived their birth. Then Leila came to console us; but still her sex made the blessing less complete; and when no other child appeared my fond wish was to marry her to my next heir, Hugh Loraine, and thus in a manner perpetuate the title and estates in a direct line through her. But, unfortunately, Hugh is a cripple, and a cripple strong and likely to live. His next brother is younger than my girl, and, to speak candidly, I do not feel inclined to marry her to a younger son, with distant prospects of the succession. Now you

may understand me. Although I may not object to you personally as a son-in-law, I feel a reluctance to put the last stone on the barrier that divides my daughter from her natural heritage."

"I can scarcely see that it makes any real difference, my lord," said the marquis, with thinly-veiled impatience. "Your wishes have been thwarted beyond human control, and it only remains to place Lady Leila in a position worthy of her. Happily I can offer her equal rank, ample wealth, an unsullied name, and most true affections, which she is willing to accept. Surely you can scarcely refuse such a settlement for her without—what shall I say? some injustice to her and myself," he went on, with some haughtiness.

Lord Deloraine's brow contracted darkly; but still he knew the reproach was merited, and he was fain to retract the blunder with as good a grace as might be.

"No doubt you would be caught at by many parents, Lord Mayfield. For myself I may say that both Lady Deloraine or I would not advance one step to win a prince of the blood for our child's husband. But, as you say, it is perhaps selfish to hesitate. If I find that Leila really does feel she can be happy as your wife I shall make no objections to your proposal."

The face of the young marquis brightened with a look of relief at the conclusion of a wearisome, and, in a measure, anxious interview.

"You shall not repent, my lord. It will be my study to surround Lady Leila with every luxury and means of enjoyment that her wildest wishes can desire. And I do hope you will not long delay the completion of what I trust I may call our mutual happiness."

"We will speak of this later. I must talk to Lady Deloraine on the subject," replied the earl. "I daresay that she will give a favourable reply, and a woman always understands these matters best. Now, I am afraid I must send you off. I have letters to write before luncheon, and I daresay you will amuse yourself quite as well elsewhere," he added, with a significant glance.

The young marquis disappeared with a brief word and smile of cordial and eager gratitude. Then he took his way hastily to summer-house which was Lady Leila's favourite resort.

It was a sort of sylvan bower fitted up by the lavish indulgence of the earl in accordance with his daughter's tastes and fancies. All her favourite pursuits were provided for in this garden-house, and it was heated at pleasure, according to its young lady's wish, in order to enable her to use it at any season. It was to this retreat that the lover hastened, and in a few seconds was at the side of its lovely mistress.

For "lovely" she was, as any poet or writer could have described: gifted by nature with a gracefully moulded slight form, eyes of the deepest blue, shaded by lashes of the darkest brown, and a skin even more attractive than a transparently fair complexion, since it varied with every emotion, and allowed its possessor to wear any colour that might suit her taste, and Leila was so young, so fresh, her every look and word and gesture so natural, and yet to that had she been less beautiful she would still have possessed the higher gift of fascination in the utmost perfection.

She looked up with a shy, sweet look as her lover entered, but she did not venture to speak.

"My Leila, my own, all is arranged. Your father consents; you will be mine in a brief space of time, though it will seem an age to me before I can call you my bride—mine for ever," he poured out, vehemently; "but tell me that you are happy, that you do love me, that you give yourself willingly, gladly to me, sweet Leila!"

The girl looked frankly, confidently at him. She was too young and transparent for any coquetry or distrust.

"Yes, Digby, gladly, willingly I trust you entirely. I will do all I can to deserve your love," came in soft, sweet, clear accents on his ear.

"And you will not grieve at leaving your home, your parents. I could not bear to see you sad and regretful, my bright darling."

"No, no, Digby, your love will be enough," she replied. "I have been very happy all my life, and papa has been the kindest and most indulgent of fathers. But, mamma, I sometimes have thought, did not care so much for me as he did. She was colder, more constrained, very often. Sometimes when she had been more free and kind and loving than usual, and I was so happy, and ventured to indulge it and show her how dearly I loved her, she would shrink back, almost with repugnance, from me, as if I was doing her some injury, or was hateful to her."

Lord Mayfield listened half incredulously.

"My darling, it might be your fancy; you are so warm and unselfish, or else it may happen that Lady Deloraine is jealous of her daughter. She is still handsome and comparatively young. Such things are, though you would never suspect them, and I think it must be the cause of Lady Deloraine's peculiarities. It will soon cease, at any rate."

At the moment a step was heard, and the subject of their conversation entered the bower. The countess was, as her son-in-law elect had said, still very handsome, and decidedly aristocratic in air and bearing. Tall and fair, with a wealth of golden hair still untouched by time, and a figure straight and lithe as if twenty years less had passed over her head, she looked rather like an elder sister than the mother of the girl, between whom and herself not a tinge of resemblance could be detected.

"I have seen your father, Leila. He has told me what has just passed between him and Lord Mayfield," said the countess, seating her-

self near her daughter. "You are so young that I thought it better to give you the sanction of my presence at once. You will pardon a mother's anxiety, Lord Mayfield. I would fain be certain that you really do feel to Leila all that I would desire her husband should," she added, turning to the marquis with a quick, restless glance.

"If perfect tenderness and love and admiration can avail to satisfy her and you, there is no fear of your disapproval and doubt, Lady Deloraine," he replied, half impatiently; "she shall never know sorrow if I can shield her from it."

"And if sorrow came, or misfortune, what then? Would you comfort and guard her then? You would not turn from her on that account, Lord Mayfield?"

He looked surprised at the strange question.

"Can you believe it possible, Lady Deloraine? I am surely not an unfeeling brute. You may be sure that it would but make her dearer than ever to me," he returned, quickly.

"You promise it? You would never desert her, never reproach her?" again asked the countess.

"Yes, yes, I do, I do," he answered, weary of such needless queries. "Dear Lady Deloraine, do not speak of such gloomy impossibilities, rather complete our happiness by promising to hasten our union as much as possible. It need surely not be delayed. A few weeks will suffice for every preparation. I have but little to arrange, thanks to my being 'lord of myself'—that heritage of woe. Shall it not be so, Lady Deloraine?"

Leila fully expected that her mother would return a haughty negative to the proposal. But to her astonishment a brief pause was succeeded by a gracious, though hesitating, consent.

"That is very like a young and impatient lover," she returned; "but still I am no friend to long engagements; and besides, there would be bad taste fixing it any time during the Christmas holidays, so that it would be necessary to have it before or after the deep winter months. I must consult the earl as to the exact period of course."

"And you will promise to use your influence for me—may I not say for me—Leila?" returned the young marquis, joyfully. "It is so completely in your province and your power to arrange it."

The countess gave a half assenting shake of the head, and then drawing her daughter's hand through her arm, prepared to leave the bower and end the interview.

"And so my dear young lady is going to be married, and a very grand match too," said the maid of the Lady Leila to the elderly housekeeper, who had been in the family for half her lifetime. "It is to be almost directly, I hear."

"Yes, so I hear, and I am very glad of it, that is if all turns out well, as I hope and trust, and the young marquis makes her a good husband," replied Mrs. Granton. "Perhaps it is the best thing for her to marry early, poor dear. I never thought my lady was over fond of her considering how pretty and sweet she is, but perhaps it was the disappointment, you see."

"What disappointment?" returned Barbara Freene, the young maid of the bride elect. "What is it, Mrs. Granton? You know how I love my young lady, and I've thought sometimes she was not so happy as she ought to be. Does not the countess like her; then, and why not?"

"Well, you see, Lady Leila was born after two or three disappointments. Three infants, who were two of them boys, had been born dead, and the earl and countess were in despair, when after three years there were hopes again of an heir, and this time it was a living child, but alas! it was a girl, and that spoilt the joy, as some people thought. And since then, when no other child came, and the title and estates are going to the son of my lord's cousin, Mr. Lorraine, it seems to me that my lady has taken a sort of secret dislike to the dear young creature, and though she tries to hide it, she has

never been so fond of, and so free and petting to her as might have been expected to an only daughter. So that is why I'm glad that the sweet young lady is to be taken away from her, and I hope, to be happy with a husband who will be proud of and kind to her as she deserves."

Barbara listened attentively to the end of the story.

"And were you here when Lady Leila was born?" she asked.

"Yes, I was here, but not with my lady, for Lady Leila wasn't born at Castle Lorraine, but rather sooner than was expected, when my lady was returning from Spa, where a cousin of hers, who was very ill, had sent for her. I always thought the anxiety and the fatigue had caused the premature birth. It was a great pity Lady Leila should not have been born here like all the family for the last two generations at the very least."

Perhaps Barbara was too young to fully appreciate the grievance that so oppressed the more elderly individual. But still she could at least comprehend that some slight was intended, or had happened to her young lady. And she redoubled her efforts and intentions to place the loving bride elect on the very pinnacle of beauty and greatness.

CHAPTER II.

Each lonely soul shall these restore,
For these the heart be duly shed;
Beloved till life can charm no more,
And mourn till pity's self be dead.

Time had spoken. A fortnight had elapsed since the betrothal of the Marquis of Mayfield and Lady Leila Lorraine.

And as if to gild the brightness of the young couple's felicity the very season seemed to have prolonged its warmth and sunshine in their honor. Never had such an autumn been known in the fair county of Dorsetshire, and the hunting parties and the rides to "meet," and excursions of every description were multiplied in proportion.

"Suppose we go to see Lord Mayfield's hounds throw off," said the earl to the party of guests assembled at the breakfast table. "What do you say, Rosalind?" he added, turning to his wife.

The countess was an accomplished horse-woman, she had joined the hunt many a time and oft in days of yore. And even now when youth was in a manner gone she still delighted in the amusement, and was the most fearless rider of the county.

"I think it would be very pleasant. Have you horses for all our ladies, Ferdinand?" she replied. "You know I can ride Black Peter, he is always so docile with me, and Leila will have her own tame Arab. The rest you must arrange as you think best."

The earl promised to consult with the stud groom, and the breakfast was rapidly finished in order to carry out the plan.

Ere another hour was over, the gay cavalcade was wending its way towards the Chaworth gates, where the meet was to take place, a distance of some seven or eight miles from Castle Lorraine; but the good steeds carried them well and rapidly, and at last they slackened rein, and gave themselves and the horses time to breathe and exchange thoughts and ideas more quickly.

It was a gay scene as ever could meet view: the brilliant company of magnates, small and great, the scarlet coats of the hunters, the neighing of the impatient horses, the baying of the hounds, and the impatient talk of the huntmen glittered and buzzed on the thin clear air. And the newcomer added to the brilliancy of the tableau. The lovely ladies, the dashing cavaliers and their horses cast a fresh prestige over the already distinguished group.

"Pon my soul," said one of the visitors, a nobleman of high rank, "Lady Deloraine looks younger and handsomer than ever, and the horse she is riding is the finest of the lot. A trifle too spirited for a lady, I fancy."

"Yes, but only look what a horsewoman she is," returned his friend. "Never saw any woman sit a horse so well, and as to fear she evidently does not know what it means."

It was about the truth. The countess in her riding habit and hat, and her well-preserved figure and face, did not look by ten years her age. And as she carelessly and easily sat her horse it was impossible to think that any risk could exist for one so practical and so fearless. The signal was given to start.

The loud horn of the huntsman, the rush of the hounds, and the galloping of the numerous horses at full speed was brief and animating enough to draw attention from the immediate details of the scene, and it was not till the crowd was fairly off that an alarmed cry was given by Lord Mayfield before he had time to realise its consequences on his sweet Leila.

"Good heavens, the countess is off! That brute will not keep behind. She cannot hold him in!" he exclaimed, anxiously.

It was but too true. Black Peter could not endure the familiar sound of the horn and the hounds' cry without an attempt to join in the animating game. Ere his rider was aware he had taken the law in his own hands and started off after the excited group.

"Good heavens! What can be done?" ejaculated the earl.

"Oh! mercy—mercy, Digby, will she be able to keep her seat, or to pull that dreadful creature in?" wailed Lady Leila. "I have entreated her again and again not to ride him, poor brave mother."

"Be calm, dear Leila. I do not think there is any real danger," he replied, "Lady Deloraine is such a splendid horsewoman; and, besides, someone is there to help her to rein in. It were only to add to the danger for anyone to follow her. She will come back very soon. Do not distress yourself."

But minutes passed away, and lengthened into at least half an hour, and still no sign of the involuntary runaway was to be seen.

"Perhaps she will go back straight to Castle Deloraine. The hounds rather tended that way, and she would not think it worth while to return here," said the marquise, soothingly. "We had better return there, I think, and leave someone here in case the countess should return."

There was some little doubt and argument as to the propriety of this course. And Lord Deloraine scarcely would listen to the probability of such a step, nor consent to leave his wife to the doubtful care of friends or acquaintances, while yet he longed to end the terrible suspense that would only be prolonged by his remaining at the spot if the countess did go the castle. But at length it was decided that he would go with Lady Leila home, and send a carriage to the spot in case of Lady Deloraine being too fatigued to ride back.

The Earl of Deloraine and his daughter scarcely exchanged a word as they rode rapidly home. The terror in their breasts was too sickening for expression; and yet they could not dare to speak hopes which might so soon be crushed in the very dust.

And when they reached the castle the earl dare hardly frame words to ask whether by any blessed chance the countess had returned there. But the blank sounding negative that was the response at once deadened the glimmer of hope that had flamed up in their hearts.

"There is not time, dear papa," pleaded Leila, with comfort that she could not take. "We must be patient for a little time. Mamma is so good a horsewoman there really is not much risk."

Lord Deloraine scarcely answered her. He hastened to give orders for the despatch of the carriage, and preparations for any orders that might be necessary on emergency. Then the terrible suspense—the weary watch commenced. Minutes rolled on. An hour had elapsed since their return.

Then a carriage was heard in the distance—slowly, but surely, approaching the castle. It came nearer and nearer, not with the quick

pace that betokens desire to end fear and suspense in those most dear and loving, but slowly—deliberately, as if some purpose was beneath such tantalising delay.

"Leila, go to the window. Is it our carriage or a visitor's?" said the earl, doubtfully.

"Oh! it is a stranger's. It is not our livery. It cannot be mamma at all!" exclaimed the girl, eagerly.

But it came to the castle. It stopped at the principal entrance. The earl literally was rivetted to the spot where he stood. He dared not, could not, move from sheer terror; but Leila, with youthful impetuosity, rushed from the room. A blank, sickening sensation followed during the next few minutes.

The earl was just about to end it by a desperate rush from the room, when the door opened and Leila appeared. Yes, it was Leila, there was no doubt of it; but the corpse-like pallor of her cheeks, and lips absolutely changed the whole expression of her loved face, and her voice sounded hollow and unnatural as she said:

"Papa, come; poor mamma is here."

"Your mother, child? What do you mean?" he said, with hoarse laugh. "Do you want to frighten me? Why does she not come?"

"She is sadly hurt, papa! She has been thrown. Do come!" wailed the girl.

The earl waited no longer. He rushed past his daughter, and flew down to the hall. No one was there, but through an open door he saw the figure of his wife lying on a sofa, and with a violent throb of agony he entered to learn the worst. There were no visible marks of injury on the fair face and form of the lady. No stain of blood crimsoned her cheeks, but she lay there still and motionless as a statue, and for a terrible moment he thought that she was dead.

"Is she gone? Is she dead?" he asked, eagerly.

"No, no, my lord! Not so bad as that, I hope. She is only stunned," returned the housekeeper, trying to restrain her own tears. "When Doctor Sawyer arrives he will know better. Don't be alarmed, my lord; it is only a swoon. There are no injuries, that I can see."

In a brief space the doctor did arrive, and there was time to try any remedies or to disturb the sufferer by moving her to her room. The examination that ensued was, perhaps, the most fearful suspense that could be well pictured to the mind, so prolonged, so important.

"Well," gasped the earl, "well, what is it, doctor? Speak, and the truth! Is she much hurt?"

"Lady Deloraine has sustained severe injuries. She has fallen on her head; she has a concussion of the brain, and I cannot yet tell what may have accompanied it. She must be kept in perfect quiet, and we will do all we can. A little time will tell us more, but it were wrong to conceal from you that there is great risk and danger in her state."

Alas! there was too terrible a truth in his words. For days the countess lay in a stupor that was broken only by occasional attacks of delirium, that was more painful than the unconsciousness that preceded it, and during that long interval it was impossible to decide whether there was any other injury sustained by the unfortunate patient. And the husband and the daughter could only watch in the side chamber and await the bulletin of each day with painful, constrained agony of spirit, that could hardly be controlled even in that hushed atmosphere of silence and suspense.

At length the crisis came. The deadened brain recovered its consciousness, and the hopes of the watchers rose once more to the eager animation of returning joy and confidence. At last the eventful day came when the truth was to be tested. The countess was now considered strong enough for the critical examination, and the earl, with a throbbing, sickening sensation at his heart, awaited in an adjoining room the result of the investigation.

It must be favourable, he could not doubt that. She was strong, in comparative youth, and it was well nigh impossible that any mortal hurt could have happened to her. So Lord

Deloraine told himself, but it did not prevent his agony during the long minutes of suspense and hushed silence around. It was broken at last—the spell of fear and hope. Doctor Sawyer came quietly and gravely into the room where he sat, and it needed scarcely a glance at his face to imagine the tidings he brought.

"Doctor, what is it? Tell me in a word! Hope, or—despair!" he gasped, in a constrained voice of composure.

"I dare not bid you hope, my lord. There is fracture of the spine that is decidedly incurable. It may be some days, or even weeks before it comes to a fatal illness, but there can be no chance of recovery. It is for me to sustain yourself and her and poor Lady Leila till all is over," added the physician, earnestly.

It was no time at the instant for consolation, but the doctor took the best mode of reassuring the unhappy husband. She had only a few hours to live, poor Rosalind, his heart's love, the choice of his youth, the pride of his manhood, the ornament of his home, the mother of his child; only one drawback had marred his union. The absence of an heir had been a cloud on their sunshine, but still at that moment he would have given that, and all belonging to him, for the life of his worshipped and suffering wife. One strong effort and for the moment it was crushed till the blank in his household should give him ample leisure for the indulgence of sorrow.

"Does she know?" he asked.

"No, my lord. It is a task that however painful should be yours," was the firm reply. "And it should not be long delayed. As I have already told you, it is a doubt whether she will last hours or days."

The earl compressed his lips in silent agony for a moment, and then he seemed to nerve himself to action and fortitude.

"You are right," he said; "it is her due. I will try, but you can scarcely tell at what a price."

A few moments more and he stood by the bedside of his suffering wife, bending lovingly over her pale features.

"Rosalind, my own—my beloved—my wife, you are brave and noble and true! Can you bear to hear the truth?" he whispered, in accents so sad and low, that Lady Deloraine could scarcely fail to gather from them the announcement of her doom.

"You mean that I am dying. Is it so?" she said, eagerly, her eyes piercing as it were into his to receive the answer.

"My precious one, would that I could die for you; would that I could tell you it was not so, but I dare not. It is too solemn a matter. Rosalind, my heart's sole joy, my companion, my beautiful, pure wife, the mother of our Leila, we must part for a time; but I shall soon follow you. It will not be long for you, my wife!"

A mortal shiver came over her frame, and a pallor that might well be that of death banished the life blood from her cheeks. She closed her eyes for a brief space, and then she suddenly opened them and fixed them fearfully on him.

"Ferdinand, will you leave me a brief space? I must think," she faltered, her lips quivering so that her words were scarcely distinct or audible to her husband.

"My beloved, surely you will not drive me from you the short time you will be with me," he remonstrated.

"Yes, yes, for a little time I must be alone; there is a necessity for it. I have that to consider that cannot be delayed," now she returned more firmly. "Just a brief space and—then—come, and alone, alone, my husband; afterwards Leila, poor, poor Leila."

And Lord Deloraine could not but comply with the solemn and dying request of the sufferer, and calling the nurse to watch in the adjoining room, he went to his own apartment to think of his misery and the mystery of his wife's conduct. It seemed an age to him ere the nurse hurriedly appeared.

"My lord, will you come? The countess is calling for you," she said, in accents that were too choking to be fully audible save where their purport had been expected.

The earl scarcely waited for the end of the summons. With the bound of a young man, rather than of one who numbered some fifty years, Lord Deloraine rushed to the dying woman's apartment. And once there the door was closed behind him, and the interview between the husband and wife was in the stillness and privacy of the death chamber. It was a scene that well befitted such a confession. The suffering countess raised herself on the pillows and her eyes glittered with excitement as she gazed on her husband.

"Ferdinand," she said, with a voice of unusual strength, "I have resolved now. I will tell you all. I cannot die with a lie on my conscience—a fraud on my heart. And you will pardon me, will you not, now that I am going to die? You cannot curse or hate your poor Rosalind now, my husband."

A strange, stern, questioning look came over the earl's features. It was perhaps the first time that he had ever bent that frowning brow and keen eye on his idolized wife; however frequently his harsh word might have been exhibited to those less dear and less privileged. "I do not understand you, Rosalind. What can you have done to dream of such anger on my part, and at such a moment?" he said, in accents as gentle as he could command under that alarming and ominous shock. "My wife, calm yourself, your sufferings have been too much for you," he added, a sudden hope flashing over him that she was suffering from some disorder of the brain.

"No—no—no," she murmured. "Not so. It is not that. It is too true, a dreadful, wretched truth that I could never have spoken save when the hand of the Almighty is on me, and I am about to appear before Him. Ferdinand, I dare hardly speak it even now. Oh, promise not to curse me—to crush me with your wrath. Be patient with me, do not leave me till I die, and forgive me, will you promise that, dearest, beloved husband? As it was for you—to save you pain that I have sinned," she went on, pleadingly.

"Rosalind, tell me one thing ere I promise? Is it a sin that no honourable man can pardon? Is it that you have been false to your vows, that you have been unfaithful to me?" he asked, a hot flush of resentment mantling his brow.

Even the pallid face of the invalid was warmed by the shame that his words brought to her high spirit.

"No, no," she said, quietly, "how can you—how dare you think it, Ferdinand?"

Then she sank again into her penitent sadness of mood.

"Alas! alas! how can I wonder? How dare I resent? But no, no, not that, husband—not that, it is all different to that. Now promise."

"I do. I will," he said, fearing perhaps that he might never learn this mystery which, however terrible, was yet far better known ere it was too late.

She motioned him to sit down by her side, and placed her hand feebly in his.

"Kiss me," she said. "Kiss me, perhaps you may not do so again."

He complied in agitated silence.

What could be the terrible secret that needed so much preparation? It came at last—like a thunderbolt on his ears.

"Ferdinand, it is this: Leila, your Leila, all lovely and sweet and loving, is not our child! We are childless, Ferdinand," she said, in a low, steady voice.

He started as if stricken by a galvanic battery, and his hand was snatched rudely from hers.

"Not ours! We childless! Woman, how dare you? What does this mean?" he exclaimed, fiercely.

"Hush, hush. You promised, Ferdinand," she said, shivering. "Listen and I will tell you all. You know how long we waited and hoped, how child after child was born to us dead, and then when fresh hopes were given us I still feared that the grief might be repeated, so while you were away, Ferdinand, on that visit to Norway I saw a great physician, and he

told me there was no hope—I could never be blessed with a living child, and I was in such agony, I thought you would hate me, Ferdinand, and—and—I resolved to deceive you, for our happiness as I believed. I arranged to bring a living child to your house and heart, and circumstances favoured me, for twins were born to one whom I could trust, and who had gentle blood in her veins. My child was born dead, like the others, and Leila was in her place. I had a babe to show you on your return."

The earl's lips were sternly compressed. He could scarcely control his anger and his agony so as to learn the rest, or to keep his promise to the unhappy sufferer.

"Go on," he said. "Go on. Why did you not complete the fraud to some purpose? Why did you not give a bastard heir instead of a useless girl when you could be guilty of such deceit?"

"Husband, I dared not. That was to rob the rightful heir of rank and title. Now Leila can but need some of your superfluous wealth, and she is even now on the eve of marrying one noble and worthy. I have injured no one but you, my husband, and you have pardoned me."

"Could you think me as dishonourable as yourself, and that I would palm a nameless foundling on a noble and trusting man as my own? Never, Rosalind, never!" he returned, sternly. "She is no daughter of mine, she is an alien!" he added, with bitter scorn.

The countess cowered under the crushing contempt, and well nigh loathing, which his words and look conveyed. She shivered violently, either from agitation or the approach of death, and a grey pallor began to steal over her features. But Lord Deloraine was too stunned and yet too bitterly indignant and degraded in his own estimation to remark the obvious change.

"Rosalind, who is she? Who were her parents? At least, I have a right to know that," he said, sternly.

There was no answer. Either from incapacity or reluctance the information was not given. His eyes were fixed on the dying woman with gloomy indignation as he spoke, and still she made no sign.

But his anger was turned to a natural horror and distress when he heard the indistinct rattle of the throat, when the lips parted in the effort to speak, and the eyes rolled hopelessly, and at length the sobbing of the lips, like that of a child in a fit of grief; a slight spasm of the limbs, and then all was over.

The countess was dead, and her secret was to be buried with her! Leila was not his child, not hers. But then whose was she? That might now never be known to human being, and now he felt that which remained was to expel her from the home and the heart that she had wrongfully usurped.

Lord Deloraine was a man of stern and proud nature. The wealth of tenderness that so often belongs to such temperaments had been lavished with vehemence and constancy on his beautiful and haughty wife.

He had been equally devoted to her, and exulted in the envy and admiration that she excited in their earlier years of married life.

Yet it was against that blameless one his hate and revenge was to be indulged. His Rosalind had been guilty; but then, by a strange perversion of feeling, he felt as if it were Leila who was the cause of her guilt. He must have a victim, and that victim would be—not his worshipped wife—but the girl who was the innocent and unconscious intruder in his home.

All this rushed through his mind the few minutes that elapsed ere he summoned the nurse to his aid in preparing the last duties to the dead. The woman was awe-stricken by the suddenness of the event; but to those of her vocation death is too ordinary a sight for alarms, and she quickly got about her task without hesitation or comment.

"My lord, shall I not call Lady Leila?" she said, when the first rites were finished, "or will you prepare her, poor dear young lady, for

the event? It is dreadful to lose a mother, and at her age too, poor darling young lady."

"Leila!" he thundered, in a tone scarcely suitable to the presence of the dead.

The nurse was perhaps daunted by the singular demeanour of the new-made widower, for she said no more, but quickly set herself to the completion of the melancholy duties that entailed on her. And Lord Deloraine repaired to his apartment with a gloomy, almost savage, look.

"What shall I do?" he moaned, as he closed the door behind him. "What shall I do?"

There was a struggle perhaps between the good and the evil in his mind. It was the future of the beautiful and gentle-bred Leila; it was the future of the high-born Digby Mayfield and all that belonged to their destinies, that hung on the issue of that brief but deadly strife in the earl's breast.

But in any case it was waged and ended. He made his election between just kindness and mercy and harsh revenge. And when at length he opened his door and appeared as a widower, with the thin gloom of bereavement on his features and his mien, his very first words, however unintelligible to the household, were a prescience of his decision.

"Send Lady Leila to me," he said, "and then let a message be despatched to Derby for the best undertaker in the place."

There was a fierce gleam in his eye and a constraint in his tone that was a source of wonder to his domestics. But they were too well trained to question or hesitate, and in a few minutes the orders were carried out, and the daughter was in the presence of her supposed parent.

(To be Continued.)

MADAME TUSSAUD'S.—In addition to the usual attractions at this popular resort, the proprietors have secured Cetewayo, from a portrait taken on board the Natal, just added to the Zulu War Group, Sir Garnet Wolseley, Sir Bartle Frere, and Lord Chelmsford. Beside is the Cabul Massacre Group—Cavagnari, the late and actual Ameer, Lord Lytton, Generals Roberts and Brown, and Indian Princes. Paris Prize Dresses. Peace and Kate Webster, from life.

MR. TOOLE'S management of the Folly promises to be remarkable for liberality. His company will be found excellent, and therefore costly, and his orders for new plays by eminent dramatists amount to something like carte blanche. The genial comedian has thrown himself into this venture with his usual energy and is resolved to make it a success. The Folly is being very nicely touched up.

NEARLY every section of London society has its club now; and those who have not clubs have "rests," like the cabmen and the porters. Now the postmen have started a rest and a club too; or rather these have been started for them by the Vicar of Kensington and some sympathising friends.

THERE is a good time coming for foreign visitors and country cousins. A cab company is being formed, which is to turn cabs into things of beauty, and cabmen into total abstinents from alcohol and bad language. The drivers in the employ of this projected company are to wear a distinctive uniform, and never are they to grumble if proffered the bare fare, or beguiled into prancing half-round London in taking benighted foreigners and hapless country cousins a quarter of a mile.

SOMEONE has got into the library of the British Museum with a measuring tape. The result is somewhat incredible. We are told that in forming the library there are three miles of bookshelves, and as these bookshelves are partitioned off in tiers from top to bottom, it is computed that there are twenty-five miles of books.

THE bazaar opened at Brighton by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught in aid of the Royal School for Daughters of Officers in the Army has realised £1,700.



[ON THE LOOK OUT.]

LINKED LOVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Clarice Villiers; or, What Love Feared."

CHAPTER V.

THE ORDEAL BEGINS.

For my heart was hot and restless
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

LONGFELLOW.

"WELL, Winnie, what do you think of the new manager?"

"Really I have not thought upon the matter, at all, Judith. He seems a very respectable young man."

"Respectable! what a word to apply to our new found paragon. Why he's quite a romance in himself. Now acknowledge he's a perfectly ideal man of business."

"Mr. Ponsonby is certainly in appearance and manner, at least, not the kind of person whom Mr. Swire might have been expected to prefer for such a post as the management of our vast property," replied Miss Glendyr, coldly.

"Gracious, how prim and precise we are this morning! Sometimes I think, Winefrede, that you and I should change places. When you put on those quite awful sober looks, and talk as didactically as Doctor Johnson, you cannot imagine how humble and meek I feel before my wise pupil."

Miss Glendyr laughed.

"Oh, I don't want to pose either as a juvenile prude or precisian, Judith," she replied, with a little laugh. "It is simply that I feel no kind of interest in this young man, who seems to have enchanted you all at his first appearance. A kind of business hero who might say, like the great Julius himself, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.'"

"Acknowledge now that he is the very handsomest man whom you have ever seen, Winefrede—a perfect Adonis."

"Yes, Mr. Ponsonby has good looks, undoubtedly," responded Miss Glendyr, with something very like a yawn. "But, for mercy sake, change the subject. Everybody at the castle has taken to ringing this young man's praises until it has become quite intolerable?"

"Everybody?"

"Yes. And he's only been here a week either. My grandfather vows he never came across a man with such a business faculty, and who sings so good a tenor sea-song. My mother, after she recovered from her first surprise that Mr. Swire should have sent so young a manager, has become perfectly enraptured with Mr. Ponsonby. Owain Dinas celebrates this stranger's skill in managing a sailing-boat, and the unerring accuracy of his aim at bird or beast; he has already become a prime favourite with the rough fishers at the hamlet, and lastly, to finish with present company, Miss Judith Vanneck is hugely taken with Mr. Ponsonby's art faculty. She professes the most intense admiration for that gentleman's water-colour studies—indeed if I mistake not she has already solicited his aid and advice to direct her own artistic efforts, and in short has become one of the most enthusiastic of that captivating young man's admirers."

Perhaps a good judge of the shades of feeling which the involuntary intonation of the human voice can express would have detected just a shade more of bitterness in the delivery of Miss Glendyr's last words than the occasion appeared to demand. Judith Vanneck coloured slightly.

"Yes, Mr. Ponsonby is a good artist," she said, quietly. "I admire his skill—perhaps have a certain admiration for the artist also. If I am so silly, I shall at least not find the sentiment reciprocated. Mr. Ponsonby has neither eyes nor thoughts for the poor and humble governess. They are better employed upon—"

Miss Glendyr turned her proud neck and raised her fine eyes with a languid curiosity.

"Whom?" she queried.

"The heiress of Caerlau—Miss Winefrede Glendyr."

A passing flush of vividest crimson swept over Miss Glendyr's matchless face.

"I hope my mother's servant is not so insolent or absurd," she responded with slow contempt and marked emphasis on the word which indicated Valentine's relation to the family. "If he is so clever a young man as you say, he should know his place better."

"You are very bitter, Winefrede."

"Bitter! Not at all. Even if this young man were guilty of such presumptuous folly as that of which you speak, do you imagine it could move me to any such feeling as bitterness? No, no! I should simply take steps to put an end to the annoyance."

"That would be difficult perhaps. Eyes and thoughts are free."

"Are they so, indeed! That is not my opinion. If I imagined that this Mr. Ponsonby failed even in thought of the respect due to his mistress's daughter, I would ensure that his stay at Caerlau should be of the briefest. But I have noticed nothing of the kind, and for once, dear Judith, I think your usual penetration is at fault."

And sinking back into her luxurious, satin-covered chair, Winefrede gently fluttered the delicate, ivory-handled, ostrich-feather-tipped fan which she held. The governess and her charge were seated in the boudoir of the latter. It was a chamber in the left wing of the castle, and one whose sumptuous appointments had perhaps never been exceeded for the combination of richness and good taste. The old baronet idolised his grandchild, and Mrs. Glendyr could deny her petted daughter nothing. To surround Winefrede with everything which her heart could desire had been the object of both.

The boudoir looked out on the broad waters of the Irish Channel. It communicated by means of folding doors with the dressing-room, and this latter again opened on the bed-chamber. The three rooms were fitted up en

suite. The polished, uncarpeted floors were laid in geometrical figures of coloured parquetry of rarest woods, and were strewn here and there with thick, soft rugs of bright hues, the products of the looms of Ispahan and Shiraz. Around the walls ran a dado of carved satin-wood, ebony and ivory, and above this the whole space to the ceiling was hung with pale violet satin, sprinkled with silver stars.

The ceilings themselves were covered with satin of a paler shade of the same colour, and fretted with fine gold cordage which crossed and recrossed upon its violet backgrounds in an infinity of intricate and tasteful convolutions. From the centre of each ceiling depended beautifully formed chandeliers of chased silver. The furniture was of satinwood and ivory, upholstered in pale violet velvet. In the boudoir stood an open pianoforte of ivory and gold. Around on the walls hung a few select water-colour sketches, bright as sunshine and fresh as the sea breeze without. A small bookcase filled with choice volumes attired in violet morocco besprinkled with golden stars occupied one recess of the boudoir, and statuettes and busts of marble and bronze, rich porcelain, rare bric-a-brac, and blossoming exotics in jardinières of Sèvres and Dresden were scattered about profusely.

All spoke of refinement and wealth, and the entire environment assorted well with the delicate beauty of the young mistress, as, attired in a morning-gown of creamy white and soft violet cachemire, she leant back indolently in her chair, shading her face with the broad fan from the mild beams of the April sun which came through the casement, while with the other she turned over carelessly the leaves of a book of poems.

Judith Vanneck understood that she must not at present resume the discussion upon the merits or defaults of Mr. Valentine Ponsonby. She too sat quiet and silent for a space, taking much note of her pupil's face and absorbed in some strange conjectures. More than one poet has assured us that "by pride the angels fell," and many a son and daughter of Adam, though noble of heart or fair of face, has succumbed to this ignoble sin of the apostate spirits.

Pride was the one blot in the otherwise lofty nature of Winefrede Glendyr. Apart from that hers was a beautiful spirit, matching well with her lovely face. Clever, tender, kind, thoughtful for others, and rarely accomplished was Winefrede, but the concentrated pride of the long generations of the Rhys and the Glendyr's seemed embodied in her.

Thus, although she treated Miss Vanneck more as a sister than a governess, yet Judith knew perfectly well that there were certain barriers between them rigid and unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. There was a point beyond which she would no more dare to trespass in her intercourse with her pupil than she would have ventured to do with Admiral Rhys himself—nay, in all probability she would have stood less in fear of the old sea-dog than of the young girl whom she herself had trained. If Judith Vanneck's thoughts could have been translated into words as she sat there watching the girlish features of her pupil, they would have run thus:

"Is she so insensible as she would appear? I cannot answer that question, but I cannot hide from myself that I hope it is so. That my conjectures as to Mr. Ponsonby's intense admiration of Winnie are correct I have no doubt, but is it love? I have asked myself that a hundred times, short as has been the sojourn of this stranger amongst us. Yet what does it matter to me? Surely I am not absurd enough to give a second thought to this penniless protégée of Mr. Swire. No, no, that would be the height of idiocy. And I am certain that Oscar is not entirely indifferent to me. Oscar Glendyr is not the peer of Valentine Ponsonby in the gifts of either body or mind, but Oscar Glendyr, although he will not inherit the admiral's wealth, will still have an ample patrimony, and his wife will rank with the élite of the county."

Meanwhile the object of the young lady's

discussion was undergoing a rather unpleasant experience, the like of which however had fallen to his lot several times already since his short sojourn at Caerlau.

The young man had descended from Sir Cynric Rhys's rooms, with his hands full of business papers, and entered what was known as the Moorish drawing-room from the oriental style of the decorations, to take certain instructions from Mrs. Glendyr. He found his patroness awaiting him with impatience.

"Dear me, Mr. Ponsonby," she exclaimed, "it is quite provoking that I should never know when I am to see you! And you must be perfectly aware that there are such important commissions to which I require your immediate attention."

The young man bowed respectfully. "There were some matters connected with sinking the projected shaft in the Rhollen-was coal field which Sir Cynric insisted upon my going over with him this morning."

"Sir Cynric," cried Mrs. Glendyr, angrily, "and so you ignore my wishes and neglect my business in order to humour my father's crochets!"

Valentine looked at the irate lady with steady calm.

"I have done that which I think is demanded to acquit myself of the duties which I have undertaken."

"If there was one thing on which I felicitated myself, Mr. Ponsonby, when I found that you were young, well educated and—a man of the world, it was that I had at length secured some one who would try at least to lighten a few of the eternal vexations and worries which I have to endure."

"I assure you, madame, that nothing—"

"Whom have I to rely on?" broke in the lady, with affected pathos. "My papa has no sort of consideration for me. Winefrede is as selfish as girls always are; Miss Vanneck requires to be told a thing twenty times over. The servants are even worse. If I require anything done there is nothing for it but that I must do it myself. And the consequence is that I am worked to death, and my nervous symptoms get quite too dreadful to be endured."

And Mrs. Glendyr applied the delicate lace-edged fragment of cambric which she held in her jewelled fingers to her eyes in order to dry some invisible tears.

"If there is anything I can do when I return from the mine—"

"When you return! Oh, there is no sort of necessity for your going. I will send for the overseer and you can arrange matters with him here after you come back from Hammercloth's, the coachmaker. Finch can drive you over in the dogcart, and you are to tell Hammercloth that the new brougham must be picked out in that very shade of sage green I chose. I won't have the olive. And tell him the lines must be finer than those on the Stanhope were. And please explain to Doubleday, the glider, that those etchings must be framed in gilt oak with buff mounts, and here is a list of new music for the bookseller."

Valentine's face wore a very sober look as Mrs. Glendyr chattered on.

"I will get Finch to drive me over, and I will see to these things," he said, "but he must make a wide détour and call at the mine first. I must arrange that business."

"Why must you?"

"Because it is business, and it is part of the work which I am here to do."

"Work!" said Mrs. Glendyr, with an expression of contempt. "Any idiot can do work, or at least work of that kind."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Glendyr," replied Valentine, gravely, "I do not think that anybody can do the work required to keep your vast estates in order easily—at least, I cannot."

"Very well, then let some of the underlings help you. I am almost ashamed that a man of your culture and style should have to condescend to the wretched labour of attending to farms and mines and so on."

"I cannot share in that regret. I am only sorry that I am so little capable of the skill

and knowledge which is required of me. I must be very frank with you in this matter, Mrs. Glendyr. I came here to be your manager; I am that or nothing. Pardon me if I say that I must honestly and honourably earn my salary or not hold my post. Please give me the list of your commissions. They shall be carefully executed."

When the young man had left the room, Mrs. Glendyr sank back in a luxurious chair with an expression of profound discontent.

"I can never get anyone to consider me," she said, plaintively. "It is very hard. But this Mr. Ponsonby will learn to be reasonable. He is only a plebeian, but he has good style and manners. He shall not be wasted in looking over common details. He has exquisite taste, and will be far better employed in attending to my wishes, and no doubt he will see that it is his interest so to do."

Valentine's thoughts as he left the presence of the mistress of Caerlau were by no means pleasant ones.

"What the deuce did old Swire send me down here for?" they ran. "It is impossible that I should stay and endure the inanities of this woman who would make me a page-boy to follow her heels and do her slightest bidding. And this Winefrede! The cold, almost insolent hauteur with which she regards me is simply intolerable. Have I been presumptuous? No, I have no wish to mix with their circle. It is sufficient for me that I do my duty. But much as I desire to earn my bread here honestly—much as I have already learned to love this old man to whom I am drawn by an attraction inexplicable to myself, I cannot descend to become either the servant of Mrs. Glendyr or the butt of her daughter's contempt. I promised Swire that I would remain here for the six months. I will do my best to fulfil my word; but there are things which are intolerable, and circumstances may transpire which may free me."

CHAPTER VI.

IN PERILS OF GREAT WATERS.

Fear was in the tossing barque
When stormy winds grew loud.

The day had arrived on which the "Osprey" was expected to arrive at the small seaport situated about half a dozen miles from Caerlau Castle. Expectation reigned in the household. Mrs. Glendyr looked forward to seeing her son Oscar, from whom any lengthened separation was always distasteful to her.

She felt also a certain interest in the coming guest, Lord Fitzvesci, whose father was the admiral's oldest friend. Sir Cynric's impatience for the arrival of the young men had somewhat subsided under the influence of the strong and strange liking which the old man had taken to the new manager.

Winefrede, who was well aware that both her grandfather and her mother had indulged in sundry matrimonial speculations touching young Fitzvesci and herself, experienced a little curiosity to see the expected guest, a feeling which Judith Vanneck fully shared.

Valentine Ponsonby could not fail to learn from the conversation of the family that young Glendyr's arrival was anticipated, and also that Oscar would probably bring some friends with him; but it so happened that Lord Fitzvesci's name did not transpire in the new manager's presence.

There was excellent anchorage for the "Osprey" in the small bay on whose shore the little town was situated; but the bar at its mouth was somewhat dangerous, and the entire coast for many miles was considered by fishermen and mariners to be exceptionally perilous when night had fallen, despite the two lighthouses of the harbour.

In her homeward course southward, ere she could make the harbour, the "Osprey" would have to skirt the rocky and precipitous headland on which Caerlau stood proudly above the breaking surges. For far out from the foot of the basalt cliff ragged splinters and sharp peaks of rock-reefs trended seaward.

Even in fair weather all passing craft took ample seamoon off Caerlau headland, and in rougher times it was, of course, still more necessary to stand well out at sea. Even in the latter case, however, passing vessels could always, save under very exceptional atmospheric conditions, be made out with a good sea-glass from the topmost turret of the castle.

So, the morning of the Wednesday being very fine and clear, the young ladies at Caerlau did not fail to sweep the seaward horizon with one of the old admiral's powerful telescopes at frequent intervals. Midday came and passed, and yet no "Osprey" rewarded their scrutiny.

As the afternoon went on Mrs. Glendyr did not hesitate to express her annoyance at Oscar's breach of his appointment. Of course after nightfall there would be no likelihood of the yacht's arrival. She would probably anchor at Holyhead.

Valentine Ponsonby had been closetted with the admiral for the greater part of the day, engaged in a multiplicity of business details. Only twice, in obedience to Sir Cynric's desire, the young man had ascended the winding staircase of the turret to learn if the "Osprey" was in sight.

As the afternoon waned, the wind chopped round almost to due south, and blew a stifling gale shoreward. It brought with it a slight sea fog, and on the horizon's edge dark masses of heavy clouds began to rise. Valentine had climbed the tower for a final look-out, for the fog and the coming twilight would soon render any barques at sea invisible from Caerlau, and Sir Cynric Rhys had liberated him for the remainder of the day.

The young man found Miss Winefrede Glendyr and Miss Vaneek leaning against the old battlements. The former was just closing a telescope and preparing to descend.

"We can spare you the trouble of a fruitless observation, Mr. Ponsonby," said Winefrede. "There is no sign of the 'Osprey.' Indeed, I really expected none. It would be rash in the extreme if Oscar were off this coast with night coming on."

"Yes, I suppose so. Now I am here, however, I will, with your permission, take a glance to the windward, although I do not doubt that your eyes are more experienced and more penetrating than mine."

The young man raised the glass as he spoke, and gazed in the direction named, moving the telescope slowly from right to left. Suddenly he stopped this motion, and concentrated his regards on one spot. The two girls watched him with some interest.

"It seems to me that I can see a white speck just where the fog lifts a little beneath that tower-shaped cloud," remarked Valentine, dubiously. "Yes, I am certain that it is a vessel—of course, it may not be the 'Osprey.'"

Miss Glendyr took the glass, but after a careful scrutiny in the direction indicated failed to discern the object. The governess was equally unsuccessful.

"A distant sea-gull flying low came across the field of view," observed the latter.

Valentine shook his head, and again adjusted the glass to his eye, but this time with no better success than his companions.

"I am convinced that the object I saw was a vessel," he said, as he relinquished the search. "Perhaps one of the Holyrood or Newin fishing-boats. The sails were too white for that though, I fancy. But I have quite lost view of it."

"It's clear that we must give up hopes of seeing Oscar at the castle to-day," said Winefrede. "Good gracious, how cold the wind has turned, Judith. Let us go down," and the party descended.

The dinner hour at the castle was early, but the twilight was deepening into night as the gong sounded. The party which assembled at table was a small one, consisting as it did only of the family circle at Caerlau, two ladies visiting there, and Valentine.

The second course had just been brought on, and Miss Vaneek, the admiral, and Mr. Ponsonby were engaged in a lively debate upon the respective merits of certain musical lions

when a tremendous clap of thunder shook the great quaintly carved oaken beams of the ceiling of the dining-hall.

"We shall have a rough night," remarked Sir Cynric. "Owain, how looks the sky?"

The butler crossed to one of the deep-embowered windows, which looked out over the sea, and drawing back the heavy velvet curtain, peered out into the gathering shadows.

"It will be a very dark night, Sir Cynric, for there is heavy clouds over the water and—soul of St. David, what was that?"

A sharp little report, all unlike the thunder's majestic reverberations, seemed to rise from afar out of the very bosom of the main. Winefrede sprang to her feet at the sound, her face blanched by fear, her eyes full of a sudden terror.

"Good heavens, it is a gun—a signal of distress!"

She sprang to the window, one lattice of which Owain Dinas had pushed open in spite of the angry gale. The table was immediately deserted by all and they hurried to the windows with one consent, even the admiral turning his sightless eyes seaward and listening intently. The suspense endured several minutes, during which the seething billows far below were twice lit up by the lightning's flash, and twice the sullen roar of the thunder rumbled over the waste of waters. Some grey-white sea-birds flew shrieking past the open windows, so near that the quick flapping of their wings was audible, but there was no repetition of the sound which had caused the excitement.

"I think it was only a stone dislodged from the tower by the swaying to and fro of the flagstaff," said Mrs. Glendyr. "Ugh! the wind is piercing! Let us return to table. Shut the windows, Owain!"

"No, no!" cried the old butler in great excitement. "It was a gun. I will swear it was a gun. Ay, and it was the little brass cannon of the 'Osprey! Yes, indeed!" and the old man wrung his hands.

"Oh, Owain, in mercy do not say such dreadful things!" cried Mrs. Glendyr, trembling violently.

Just then the bosom of the black cloud which hung over the ocean seemed to open and a flash of such intense vividness leaped forth that the group recoiled a pace, dazzled and dismayed, and even the blind orbs of the old admiral appeared to be susceptible of the intense radiance by the involuntary movement which he also made.

One member of the company only kept his station. It was Valentine. He had shielded his eyes to some degree by his bent palm placed to his brow. And when the deafening thunder-clap which succeeded had passed the young man said in those deep tones which betoken intense although subdued excitement:

"There is a vessel out there, driving under bare poles to the shore!"

"What is she, Mr. Ponsonby?" cried old Owain. "You say poles—ah, she is a brigantine perhaps! Ah, do not say she is a schooner! No, indeed!"

"I believe her to be a schooner yacht!" responded the young man with deep solemnity.

He felt a light touch on his arm, and turning round, was startled by the terror on Winefrede's pale face.

"Oh, no! Mr. Ponsonby, you are deceived! It cannot—must not be!"

"A schooner yacht!" ejaculated the admiral, his tremulous tones grown firm and clear. "Heavens! it is the 'Osprey.' Oh, Oscar!"

A little bright streak of fire shot from the breast of the dun obscurity which half veiled the troubled sea, followed immediately by a sharp report. The sound was echoed by a heavy fall upon the polished floor of the dining-hall. Mrs. Glendyr had fainted.

"See to your mother, Winefrede," commanded the admiral in a strong decisive voice. "Miss Vaneek will assist you. Owain, light the beacon on the south tower and follow us when it is well ignited. Mr. Ponsonby, give me your arm to aid me in the descent of the cliff. Let us see if it is not possible to launch a boat!"

Old Dinas seized one of the great waxen tapers from its silver sconce and rushed from the room. Winefrede and Judith raised the unconscious form of Mrs. Glendyr, and Sir Cynric, aided by Valentine, hurried from the hall.

Outside the castle, gathered in an anxious knot, on the rocky plateau in front of the edifice, they found most of the servants, gazing down at the savage strife of the Irish Sea and clinging to each other in order to maintain their station.

"Men, follow us!" cried Valentine as he and his companion passed them.

The summons was obeyed. At that juncture a broad ruddy glow flashed from the tall tower above their heads, and threw a red stream of light into the murky air and on the foam-tipped waves which curled up angrily at the cliff foot sixty feet below.

With some difficulty Valentine began to guide Sir Cynric along the steep pathway which zig-zagged perilously from the eminence on which the castle was placed to the tiny fishing hamlet of Caerlau, which stood on a small space of shingly beach where a beach occurred in the iron-bound cliff-line of the coast.

They had not taken fifty paces before Owain Dinas came rushing after and gave his effective aid in supporting the old admiral. During that dangerous descent the lightning lent its lurid lustre, the thunder came in heavy and still heavier peals, and the storm-wind howled around the little group as if intent to deter them from their errand.

But they reached the sandy level safely, and as they did so, Valentine, looking back on the dizzy descent by which they had come, saw by the blue illumination of the lightning and the crimson glare of the beacon fire, a female form just beginning to essay the same pathway of peril. His heart told him that it was none other than Winefrede Glendyr.

"Pardon me," he cried, hurriedly, "I will leave you for a minute to Owain's care."

The next instant the agile and athletic youth was mounting the rock with the speed of a chamois hunter.

"You should not encounter this risk, Miss Glendyr," he panted, as he stood by the girl's side.

"What, not when my brother is yonder?" And she pointed across the howling waste of seething waves.

No other word passed between. With tender care Valentine helped the girl down. It was less needed than with his former charge. Winefrede's light firm step did not falter despite the fierce gusts which surged past.

It was nevertheless well for Winefrede that she had a strong arm on which to lean as she passed rapidly down the serpentine rock path. Nor when she had gained the safer footing of the strip of beach dared she immediately relinquish Valentine's support.

For the wind came driving up in savage swirls and shrieking gusts, and on its fierce eddies was borne a heavy waiko of mingled sand and sea-spray which filled the air with a turbulent mist and out the girl's delicate face with its cold and pitiless hail.

They found the admiral and Owain Dinas standing amid a little knot of fishermen and their wives and the servants of the castle. The group was at the extremest edge of the shingly beach so that the green in-rolling waves, whose white foam-flecked crests the beacon-light tinged with crimson, curled around their feet unheeded.

The members of the little assembly were in excited conversation, the purport of which was at once evident to Valentine, notwithstanding the mixture of the English and Welsh languages in which the discussion was conducted. It was clear to the young man that Sir Cynric Rhys was pressing some proposal upon the men which was distasteful to them.

"No—no, it cannot be done, Sir Cynric," said one of the fishers, "and you, as a sailor, know it cannot. If we launched a boat it would be staved in like an eggshell on the reefs in a couple of minutes."

But the admiral did not desist from his expostulations and entreaties. Meanwhile the gun had again sounded its sharp appeal, and by the successive lightning flashes the doomed yacht could be easily made out as she dashed on nearer and nearer to her fate. For there could be no escape if she continued her course, and human skill and strength could not avail to change it.

Far out to sea, from the foot of the Caerlau cliff, to which the vessel was heading, the whole of the sea was set thick with sharp, spear-like, jagged rocks, around which the yeasty waves surged.

"Oh, Mr. Ponsonby, can nothing be done?" said Winefrede, as she clung convulsively to Valentine's arm.

"I will see, Miss Gendyr," he responded, respectfully, removing her hand.

Then advancing to the group of fishers he cried in clear, distinct tones which rose above the turmoil of the tempest:

"My lads, you have already learned to know that I can pull a stout oar. What man will lend me his boat, and who will go with me to the rescue?"

The men stood silent for a moment, then a weather-beaten, grizzled senior replied:

"We would follow you even to the death, sir, if there was the shadow of a chance; but there is none. Heaven be merciful to Mr. Oscar and the men of the good craft 'Osprey.' But would they, think 'ye, sleep any the more peacefully under the green waves because we had shared their fate and left wives and mothers and children to wail our wasted lives? No, Mr. Ponsonby, it would be madness!"

(To be Continued.)

FRENCH COMMON LIFE.

A PLEASANT picture of French life is given by a lady who passed a year or two among the common people. Her entertainers were young married people, and Victor, the husband, assisted his wife in the housework. He was a man of great ingenuity, fertile in resource. On the arrival of the guest at seven o'clock in the evening they had the family dinner, consisting of a ragout or stew of potatoes and meat, sardines, wine of two kinds, and a bit of delicate cream cheese for dessert. The best meal is the breakfast, which is in the middle of the day. On Sunday they had a visitor to breakfast. Victor began his preparations at an early hour, making a great display with the white table cloth, the oranges and apples that he placed on it, and the scarlet radishes which were artistically arranged on the dish.

For breakfast, the first thing was the lovely radishes, with excellent bread and butter, then a piece of veal roasted in a tin kitchen before the charcoal grate, and nearly buried in the toothsome sorrel sauce. The wine was opened and white wine poured into small tumblers. The next course was a dish of young and tender string beans with butter. Then came a salad dressed with oil and vinegar, without sugar, accompanied with a bottle of choice red wine, when glasses were touched all round, and healths were drunk. The breakfast wound up with the oranges and apples and black coffee with sugar, "which," says the writer, "I am told is from beets, and costs fifteen sous a pound, the French pound being one-tenth heavier than ours."

SLEEPING.

AN uncomfortable position in sleeping will often prevent repose. Lying flat on the back with the limbs relaxed would seem to secure the greatest amount of rest for the muscular system. This is the position assumed in the most exhausting diseases, and it is generally hailed as a token of revival when a patient voluntarily turns

on the side; but there are several disadvantages in the supine posture which impair or embarrass sleep. Thus, in weakly states of the heart and blood-vessels, and in certain morbid conditions of the brain, the blood seems to gravitate to the back of the head, and produce troublesome dreams. In persons who habitually, in their gait or walk, stoop, there is probably some distress consequent on straightening the spine.

Those who have contracted chests, especially persons who have had pleurisy, and retain adhesion of the lungs, do not sleep well on the back, but rest more satisfactorily on the side. Many persons are deaf in one ear, and prefer to lie on a particular side; but, if possible, the right side should be chosen, and the body rolled a little forward, so that any saliva that may be secreted shall run easily out of the mouth, if not unconsciously swallowed. Again, sleeping with the arms thrown over the head is to be deprecated; but this position is often assumed during sleep, because the circulation is then free in the extremities and the head and neck, and the muscles of the chest are drawn up and fixed by the shoulders, and thus the expansion of the thorax is easy. The chief objections to this position are that it creates a tendency to cramp and cold in the arms, and sometimes seems to cause headache during sleep, and dreams.

A FRIEND.

I LOOK not at station, I seek not for wealth,

Contented to find one that's honest and true;

Let the selfish bend knee or worship in stealth

The owner of riches, respected by few.

I'd rather delight in the friendship of one

Whose grasp of the hand was the key to his heart—

Who'd stride fearlessly on till life's battle was won

And never once waver or seek to depart

From the path that his conscience had told him was right,

Tho' not strewn with flowers or beaming with light.

Then, oh! may I find one whose hand shall meet mine,

Whose eye shall not quiver or seek to evade

My gaze, as I look in those bright orbs that shine

In the calm tranquil beauty that never can fade.

Be their light as a beacon to guide me to seek

The bliss only gained by the good and the true,

The harbour that shelters the lowly and meek,

Which is sought by the many and found by the few,

That I might safe anchor where no storms can destroy,

Where no waves can engulf—all is sunshine and joy.

O. P.

MR. BYRON observes a curious contradiction. One Havannah cigar, he says, may make a man ill, but two will not make a Manilla.

RESPECTING the annulment of the Prince of Monaco's marriage, of which we have heard so much, it will not be granted. The Pope, tired of the cardinal's indecision in the matter, has taken the case in his own hands, which means: that no man shall put asunder what God and the Church have united. The Prince and Princess of Monaco, therefore, must resign themselves to their chain.

PARIS STORES.

THE ladyshopper in Paris enjoys many advantages. The shops are large, well lighted and handsome. The Bon Marché is a marvel as a representative shop. It has a capital buffet on the first floor, where the exhausted customers can strengthen the inner man; it has a reading-room, where I have seen numbers of gentlemen reading the evening papers, or writing letters, presumably while their wives were ransacking the treasures beyond. There is also a picture gallery filled with very fair works by artists, who are at liberty to exhibit free of any cost or charge for the space of six weeks. If during those six weeks no bid is made for the picture it is returned to the artist, who has, at all events, had some publicity, if nothing more.

These rooms, the picture gallery, the refreshment room, and the reading-room—I am glad to say there is no smoking-room—are "got up" with an elaboration of magnificence that takes one's breath away at first sight. The ceilings are pannelled and painted and carved with all the skill and taste for which French decorators are famous. The recesses are filled with luxuriant evergreens and marked by graceful drapery, the table and chairs are in carved oak, the large lamps with their green silk shades throw a brilliant light on to the newspaper or writing-pad—everything is done in short to make this department of the place as attractive as it can be, so that the husband who waits there for his wife shall be softened and mollified by all that he sees, and shall not pull too long a face at the total figure of her bill. We still have some things to learn.

BURMAH AND THE BURMESE.

THE Burmese are a very interesting and sociable race, fair in complexion, short, stout, well-proportioned, brave, and hospitable, especially to strangers, whom they entertain free of charge. The men tatoo themselves with an indelible tint; their dress being smaller is not so handsome or graceful as the garments of India. The various titles of the nobility are not hereditary. Education is fairly advanced considering the state of the nation as regards other matters. Everyone is supposed to be able to read and write, palm leaves and books of ivory leaves supplying the place of paper, which is difficult to obtain. The literature consists of songs and chronological histories.

Buddhism is the general recognised religion of Burmah; the education of the people is entirely in the hands of the priests; formerly there were priestesses, but this order has been since abolished. Everything is at the disposal of the king, who is lord of the life and property of all his subjects. He has two councils, by means of which the royal orders are issued; many of the laws are very good, but the punishments are sometimes exceedingly cruel. The standing army is small, and composed of infantry with a small body of cavalry, but these are very inferior and badly equipped.

AMONGST the presents given on a recent occasion at a fashionable wedding was a large Japanese chest full of tea from Mincing-lane.

A LADY was once asked why she always came so early to church. "Because," said she, "it is a part of my religion never to disturb the religion of others."

TO EXTERMINATE MOTHS IN FURNITURE, CLOTHES, &c. beat your couch with a cane in the open air, and brush it well to remove all the dust possible: then dissolve a drachm of camphor in two ounces of spirits of wine, and sprinkle the couch well with the mixture. Articles of clothing sprinkled with Scotch snuff and well pinned up in pieces of linen when not required, may be thus saved from the attacks of moths.

KISSING DOGS AND CATS.

A CORRESPONDENT makes the following remarks on the habit which some people have of kissing dogs and cats. "The report of the epidemic at Darmstadt being concluded, allow me to make a remark as to its possible cause, one which I have not observed taken notice of in the correspondence of this singular outbreak of the disease. It is well known that women and children are in the habit of kissing pet cats and dogs, especially when these favourites are ill, with discharge from the nose, cough and sore throat, and even use their pocket-handkerchiefs to wipe away the secretion. I have seen this done frequently. It is a common saying, 'There the cat has got a cold; now it will go through the house;' and as this remark has been repeatedly fulfilled, it shows how careful people should be in avoiding contact with such a mode of contagion. I do not affirm that this was the way in which the disease was contracted either within or without the palace walls, but I feel sure the habit of kissing pets is a source of danger that should be widely known."

ETHEL ARBUTHNOT;

OR,

WHO'S HER HUSBAND?

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Amy Robeart," "The Bondage of Brandon,"
"Breaking the Charm," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXI.

A STRANGE ACCIDENT.

But times are altered.

GOLDSMITH.

WHEN the funeral of Charles Palethorpe had taken place, Ethel became very quiet and melancholy. She did not seem to have anything to live for, all her duties were performed in a mechanical manner, and she seldom spoke unless she was addressed first; all her interest in life appeared to be lost.

She heard incidentally that Herbert Gordon had gone abroad, but that caused her no anxiety. Where he went was a matter of indifference to her, for her heart was lying in the grave of the young artist, whose career had been so untimely cut short, owing to his devotion to her.

Every day she went for a walk to the little cemetery in which his remains were laid, and placed such flowers as she could obtain, at that time of the year, on his grave. They were only snowdrops, crocuses or daffodils, yet they formed a pleasing floral tribute to the memory of the unfortunate young man. A few weeks passed and the hunting season began.

Occasionally they heard the deep baying of the hounds and saw the flight of scarlet-coated huntsmen go by. One day a countryman who had been working in a field came running up to the cottage and saw Mrs. Simmons, the old woman who worked for Mrs. Arbuthnot.

"Missis," he exclaimed, "the huntsmen ha' been going through t' wood and one of the gentlemen has had a main bad fall."

"Is he killed?" asked Mrs. Simmons.

"No. It bain't so bad as all that, but his foot's put out and he can't walk. Shall I bring him in here?"

Mrs. Simmons was in doubt what to answer for Mrs. Arbuthnot and Ethel were both out walking. An accident in the hunting field is of frequent occurrence, but it is an awkward thing when a man is thrown from his horse a long way from home and his companions have not seen it.

In this case the hunter seemed to have taken a course of his own, and unless some compassion was shown him he would have to remain where

he was for a considerable time, so Mrs. Simmons decided upon taking him in.

"Bring him up," she said. "I don't think missis will mind. You can lay him on a bed, and he can tell you where to send for his friends."

The countryman ran away and presently returned with a tall, handsome gentleman leaning heavily on his arm.

"Can I come into your cottage, good woman?" he asked. "I have sprained my ankle badly, and I fear I shall be laid up for some weeks. It is nothing serious, and I will pay you well for any little attention you may be inclined to show me."

"Come in and welcome, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Simmons, sir, is my name, but—"

"That will do, my good Mrs. Simmons. Don't talk too much, please. I hate to hear a woman chatter," interrupted the gentleman.

"Shall I send for a doctor, sir?"

"No. I am my own doctor. A sprained ankle does not require much more than rest and cold water. I may stay here for a few weeks. I suppose you don't want any reference with me. If you do, there is my card, that will speak for itself. Now let me cut my boot off and get to bed."

He gave the labourer who had brought him to the cottage some money and told him where to take his horse, then he went upstairs, cut off his boot, as his foot had swelled considerably, and bandaged it with some calico the old woman gave him.

At his request she brought him some books to read, and he made himself as comfortable as the pain he was suffering would permit him. A short time afterwards Mrs. Arbuthnot and her daughter came home.

"Oh, ma'am! Oh, miss!" exclaimed Mrs. Simmons. "There's a gentleman upstairs, he met with an accident while hunting, and has sprained his ankle. I took him in because I thought you wouldn't mind. Here's his card."

She handed the pasteboard to Mrs. Arbuthnot, who gave it to her daughter.

"You read it, Ethel, my dear," she said; "I can't see without my spectacles, my sight is so bad."

Ethel took the card carelessly, but her gaze no sooner fell upon it than she uttered a cry.

"Great heaven!" she said.

"What is the matter, my darling?" asked her mother.

"Who do you think our uninvited guest is, mamma?"

"How should I know? Tell me."

"Sir Brandon Arbuthnot."

"Never!"

"Look at his card. That speaks for itself."

Mrs. Arbuthnot looked surprised indeed.

"This is strange," she said. "Did you mention our names, Mrs. Simmons?"

"No, ma'am," replied the old woman. "The gentleman thinks the cottage is mine."

"Then let him continue to think so," answered Mrs. Arbuthnot.

"Why, mamma?" asked Ethel.

"Let me have my way in this matter, my dear. I have my reasons," replied her mother.

Ethel made no further objection.

The advent of Sir Brandon Arbuthnot in the calm, secluded precincts of Brook Cottage was like the unexpected descent of a hawk in a dovecot. He was the very last person that either Ethel or her mother had expected to see, and from what they had heard of him, they both thought he was a very fierce, irritable, disagreeable sort of person, such as are many men who have been long in the East Indies.

"Why do you want him here, mamma?" she asked, "and why should he not know who we are?"

"In the first place, my dear," replied Mrs. Arbuthnot, "if he is as badly hurt as Mrs. Simmons says, he cannot be in a fit state to be

removed, and secondly, I thought if we were kind and civil to him, and treated him well, we might tell him who we are when he is going away, and in return he might be induced to do something for us."

"Something for us?" repeated Ethel, scornfully.

"Yes, if he gave me a small pension, it would be very nice."

"I would not accept a penny from him, mamma," Ethel replied, indignantly, "and how you can be so mercenary I cannot imagine, but you always thought more of money than anything else."

"What can we do without it?" said the old lady; "look at the nice clothes and good things to eat it buys. At my age I want nourishing food and wines, which I cannot get now. It is all very well at your time of life to be independent, but with all your pride, I suppose you have not forgotten what we suffered at Morecambe."

"No, and I never shall," answered Ethel. "Yet, that is no reason why we should be beholden to Sir Brandon. He despises us and calls us vulgar, common people."

"Because he does not know us, my dear."

"I don't mind keeping him in ignorance of who we really are, mamma?" exclaimed Ethel, after a brief pause for reflection. "For it will be a glorious revenge, when he finds it out, as he no doubt will, some day, but I will not consent to your making any capital out of it, remember that."

"Why not?" inquired Mrs. Arbuthnot, in a tone of deep vexation.

"Because I will not have it. If you do not promise me to abandon any idea you may have on his purse and pocket, I will go upstairs instantly and inform him in whose hands he is."

Ethel spoke determinedly, and seeing that she was very much in earnest, her mother gave way and made the required promise, though she did it with an ill grace.

"I am always sacrificed to your whims," she said, impatiently, but she comforted herself with the reflection that Sir Brandon might be induced to do something for them, after all.

"You and Mrs. Simmons are too old to run up and downstairs?" remarked Ethel, "so I suppose I shall have to do all the waiting on this Bengal tiger."

"You are young and active," replied her mother. "It will not hurt you, and besides it will be something for you to do. I am rather glad this accident has happened. Your mind will be taken off poor Charles Palethorpe's death; you will not have so much time to think of that villain Herbert Gordon."

Mrs. Arbuthnot had come to dislike Herbert quite as much as Ethel did, and rich though he was, she would have now been very sorry to see her daughter have anything to do with him. With a feeling heart and an affectionate disposition, Ethel could not forget Charles Palethorpe. Her heart was really lying in the early grave to which Herbert had basely sent him. She knew it was silly to think of one who could never be anything to her, yet she could not help it. Sometimes she bestowed a thought upon Tom Woodruffe. Blunt, kind, honest outspoken Tom, who was every inch an English gentleman, but such is the perversity of human nature, especially feminine human nature, that she could not love Tom Woodruffe. It was very strange.

Charles Palethorpe was lost to her for ever. The cold grave had closed over his mortal remains. Herbert Gordon she now hated and despised as much as she had once cared for him, and it was all his own fault. He could never be anything to her again, and she knew so much about him that he would not dare to claim her as his wife. That unfortunate marriage was just as if it had never taken place, and so Herbert was out of the category; but with regard to Tom Woodruffe it was different.

In spite of his mother's disapproval of his liking for Ethel, the latter knew very well that he would at any moment cast himself, his name, and his fortune at her feet. She had to send

him every month an account of her stewardship, which he acknowledged in a brief letter, always giving his address, on the Continent, for the next month.

She had only to write to him and he would fly to her on the wings of love. A few words, such as, "Come to me. I am willing to be yours," would bring him as fast as the express train could carry him. But those few simple words she could not write because she did not love him, and she was far too good and genuine a girl to sell herself to any man because he could afford to buy a wife.

Sometimes she felt afraid of Herbert Gordon. He was an unscrupulous scoundrel and had openly threatened her before he had quitted Brook Cottage, after his exposure and discomfiture by Charles Palethorpe, who only had lived to see and denounce him. Perhaps, even then, he was scheming and plotting; when she least expected it, his arm might reach out from afar and touch her. That he loved her and wanted her for his wife she well knew. To fall into his power would be dreadful. The more she thought over the matter the more she was obliged to confess to herself that she was afraid of this man. The fire was flickering in the grate, and Mrs. Simmons came up with a lamp in her hand, which she placed on the table.

"How soon it do get dark, to be sure, now the days have drawn in," the old woman remarked. "He upstairs will be ringing for lights soon."

The doctor had been during the day and bandaged up the sprained ankle from which Sir Brandon was suffering. He declared that no bones were broken and that in six weeks he would be able to walk about, with the aid of a stick. A sprained ankle is as troublesome and more painful than a broken leg. It requires time and patience to cure it. Sir Brandon, as we know, was not a very good-tempered man, and his sufferings were not exactly calculated to improve his temper.

"When Sir Brandon does ring," said Ethel, "I will attend to the bell. Bring another lamp please, Mrs. Simmons, so that I may have it in readiness."

"Yes, miss, you'll have a nice time of it with him," replied the old woman. "He's rather grumpy and orders you about like a dog. He must ha' been used to driving niggers, I think, where he came from."

Shaking her head, as if she very much disapproved of her young mistress waiting upon so unamiable a person as Sir Brandon seemed to be, Mrs. Simmons left the room.

"Ethel," remarked Mrs. Arbuthnot, "an idea has occurred to me."

"What is it, mamma?" asked Ethel; "any idea of yours is sure to be interesting; is it connected with the caged tiger upstairs?"

"It is. What if Sir Brandon were to admire your beauty and fall in love with you as so many others have done?"

Ethel burst out laughing.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, "I didn't think I could laugh to-day, but whatever has put that idea in your head. Fancy these severely proud aristocrat, the *crème-de-la-crème* of the baronetage, falling in love with a 'vulgar person' like poor I. It is impossible to entertain the idea for a moment."

"Less impossible things have happened than that. Better men than he have fallen in love with worse women than you."

"I hope he won't trouble himself to do anything of the kind, and yet I don't know. I am not a flirt or a coquette, but there would be a sort of poetical revenge in it, wouldn't there, mamma?"

"Undoubtedly."

"It would only be another heart broken!" smiled Ethel; "mine is broken already. Suppose I go in for breaking the baronet's, just for fun?"

"Oh, Ethel! how can you run on so?" asked Mrs. Arbuthnot, shocked.

"Oh, mamma," said Ethel, "where's the harm. I should never accept him, I admit; but it is so lonely here, one must do something. Ah! there is the bell. That is just what I have been

waiting for. How fiercely he rings it. The tiger is enraged. Perhaps he has been asleep and has woke up in a bad temper, or his leg hurts him. Now I shall have a look at this terrible East Indian, and I must confess to some slight curiosity."

The bell rang a second time furiously. Sir Brandon was evidently in a hurry. Ethel took the lamp and went upstairs, knocked at the door and entered.

"You rang, sir, I think?" she exclaimed, demurely.

"I should think I did," replied Sir Brandon, who was sitting in an arm chair with his injured foot resting on another; "Do you suppose I want to sit in the dark all night?"

"I really did not trouble myself to think anything about you," she replied, setting down the lamp.

"You are the servant, are you not?" he asked rather more mildly, as he eyed her by the light, being evidently struck by her ladylike demeanour and undeniable beauty.

"I am the daughter of the lady of the house," she answered.

"Ah! you are Miss Simmons. I have seen your mother—the old woman—lady, I mean, as you call her."

Ethel stood with her hands folded in front of him and made no answer.

"Well," he continued, "I want to be made as comfortable as possible, and you can charge what you like. Bring tea up, with something to eat, in an hour, and, look here, can you write?"

"A little," replied Ethel, scarcely being able to restrain an inclination to laugh.

"Ah, that will do. I suppose education is scarce in these parts and you are very poor?"

"Very," she said.

"I find that I have injured my right hand as well as my foot," Sir Brandon continued, "and cannot hold a pen. I want to send a line to my solicitor. Get papers and ink and I will dictate to you."

"Now?"

"Yes, at once," he replied, imperiously.

"I am sorry, but you will have to wait," said Ethel. "I have something to attend to downstairs. When I am at liberty, I will write your letter for you."

He stared at her in surprise.

"Young woman," he exclaimed, "may I be permitted to ask what your avocation in life is? That is—a—what do you and your mother do for a living?"

Ethel flashed her dark eyes full upon him.

"No, you may not," she replied. "I am not in the habit of answering impertinent questions. You are a guest in our house. An accident has sent you here. We will do our best to make you comfortable. When you are well you can go, and if you choose to thank us you can, if not, *cela m'est égal*. In the words of scripture, you were a stranger and we took you in. I do not mean that in a worldly sense, for we shall charge you nothing?"

"Oh, but that won't do, you know," cried Sir Brandon. "I am rich and—"

"We do not value wealth, Sir Brandon. I would do," said Ethel, interrupting him, "for a common farm labourer the same that I am doing for you."

"Very strange," replied the baronet. "I can scarcely make you out. You talked French just now. Are you acquainted with that language?"

"Oh, yes. I will send you up some books, if they would interest you. I have Molière, Racine, Housage, Bruiliet, Zola."

Completely astonished, Sir Brandon could only bow and say "Thank you." He had taken Ethel for a common country girl and she had turned out a mystery to him. He was both piqued and interested, but his foot hurt him so much that he was nearly wholly occupied with his physical troubles. When Ethel went down to the parlour her mother looked inquiringly at her.

"How did you get on with our distinguished guest?" she inquired.

"Not very well. We have had a quarrel already," replied Ethel. "He is as handsome as

he is proud, and I am sure we shall be charming enemies."

"Why enemies, my dear?"

"Because there can be no peace between us. I see that. Presently I am going to write a letter for him to his solicitor. He is delightfully insolent. He actually wanted to know if I could write."

Ethel laughed at the recollection and went into the kitchen to arrange something nice for the baronet's tea. Scarcely had she finished this than she saw a face at the window. It was that of Madge the gipsy, who beckoned her to come outside the house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WARNING.

And broken strings, the harp of life
Gives out no music strain.
Save the low wailing sounds that come
Through memory's sad refrain.

KNOTT.

Curious to know what the old gipsy had to say to her, Ethel ordered Mrs. Simmons to take up Sir Brandon's tea and to offer him his choice of some French books, then she went outside. It was a cold chilly evening and she drew her shawl closely around her shoulders.

"What want you with me?" she asked.

"Lady," replied Madge, "I have come to warn you."

"Of what?"

"My mind has been sorely troubled about you. I was passing through the churchyard where your lover is buried and I saw a corpse candle burning brightly over his newly-made grave. In the flame I read mystic words: danger is threatening you."

Ethel made an impatient gesture.

"This is some trick and device to get money out of me," she said.

"No," replied Madge, "you paid me well for what I did before. This warning I give you for nothing, because I take an interest in your sweet face, and feel sorry for the sorrows of your youth."

Slightly impressed with the woman's manner and apparent disinterestedness, Ethel determined to listen further.

"What is the nature of the danger, my good woman?" she asked.

"It is difficult to tell," replied Madge. "Some one is plotting against you, but he is afar off. Have you an enemy, lady, in foreign parts?"

In a moment Ethel thought of Herbert Gordon, and trembled as she did so, for the gipsy's warning seemed to be a realisation of her fears.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "I have reason to believe that a secret foe is plotting against me out of Europe. Can you not tell me more?"

The gipsy shook her head.

"Our art is limited, lady," she responded; "we can tell so much and no more. The corpse candle had your figure in it, and you were vainly struggling in the arms of some man whose face I could not distinguish; be careful, for you are warned in time."

Ethel endeavoured to thrust a few coins upon her, but Madge refused to accept them, and saying, "An old woman's blessing on you, my dear, for I know you deserve it," she hurried away and was soon lost in the darkness.

Filled with dread misgivings Ethel returned to the house, blaming herself for believing what the aged Gitan had told her, and yet thinking that she must have some knowledge of a hidden mystic lore.

Fearing Herbert Gordon as she did, and remembering his threats, it was easy for her to put confidence in the gipsy's story.

Mrs. Arbuthnot saw that she was pre-occupied, and noticed that she looked vacantly into the fire as if trying to read her features in the ever-changing shape of the burning coals.

"What ails you, Ethel?" she demanded.

"I have seen the old gipsy woman again, mamma," replied Ethel, "and she has given me a mysterious warning that some one in foreign parts is plotting against me. She saw a corpse candle hovering over Charles Pale-

thorpe's grave, and she tells me there is danger in the air."

Mrs. Arbuthnot smiled contemptuously. "All a trick to get money, my dear," she replied.

"Not at all. She wouldn't take anything from me."

"Then I am inclined to think that Herbert Gordon is at work, and has employed the gipsies to help him in some wicked scheme," said her mother.

"If so, why should Madge warn me?"

Mrs. Arbuthnot was unable to answer this question.

"I cannot tell," she said. "It seems to me that we have nothing but trouble and worry. I wish you had never seen a man. Your lovers are always unfortunate. Please don't tell me anything more. I am getting old and cannot bear all this excitement."

"Why reproach me, mamma?"

"Oh, I can't say! My head is not very strong. I want peace and quietness. First of all you marry a man, nobody knows who he is, and he afterwards turns out to be somebody else, then you marry another, and he dies. Who's your husband? Sometimes I get so puzzled over it all, that I wish I never had had a daughter. Sons are the best children, they can take care of themselves."

Ethel looked deeply grieved.

"This is cruel, mamma," she remarked. "I did not expect this sort of thing from you."

The conversation was brought to a close by Sir Brandon's bell, which was rung as a reminder to Ethel that she had promised to write for him.

"My new master calls me, I must go!" she exclaimed, rising.

Sir Brandon looked pleased when he saw her enter the room, with writing materials in her hand.

"I thought you had forgotten me," he remarked.

"Not at all. I never forget anything," Ethel replied, spreading the paper before her and taking the pen in her hand, awaiting his dictation.

"Please write: My dear Clews,—I am laid up with a sprained ankle, arising from an accident in the hunting field, and the country Æsculapius I have called in kindly tells me I shall be confined to the house for some weeks, which to me, a man of my active temperament, is anything but a cheering prospect. There are several things I wish to consult you about, and I fear I shall have to trouble you to come down to Brook Cottage, on the Woodruffe estate, near Morecambe."

He paused, and Ethel looked up.

"Have you got that?" he queried.

"Yes," she replied.

"I hope the big word I used instead of doctor did not puzzle you."

"Æsculapius? Oh, no, not in the least. I did not require a dictionary to spell that, thank you. Shall I proceed?"

"If you please. Go on to say: Have you gained any intelligence respecting the people in whom I have taken such an interest—I mean the Arbuthnots? If we could only find Miss Ethel and induce her to accept an allowance, it would remove a great weight from my mind, and I am afraid they must be in deplorable want. Let me see you soon.—Yours faithfully, BRANDON ARBUTHNOT."

Ethel was much surprised at the concluding portion of this letter, but she did not betray her astonishment.

"So you have poor relations?" she remarked.

"Yes," he answered. "It is quite a romance. When my brother died I was away in Burmah. People thought I was dead, and my niece—I believe that is the correct degree of relationship existing between us, Miss Ethel Arbuthnot—took possession of the property. Of course when I came back she had to give it up."

"That was hard."

"It was. Since then they, I mean she and her mother, have been in great distress."

"How are you aware of that?" asked Ethel.

"Clews and I traced her to Morecambe about the time she was discharged from a shop where she had been working, and we have not been able to find her since."

"Perhaps they are not worth taking any trouble about."

"On the contrary, they are. Ethel behaved splendidly. She gave up everything, and Clews says she is a perfect lady."

"Have you ever seen her?"

"No, I have not. My impression at first was that they were common, vulgar people, because I hear they used to maintain themselves by keeping a shop," replied the baronet.

"Was not that greatly to their credit?" Ethel inquired.

"Perhaps it was. I have a prejudice against trade, you know. I come of a stock of mailed barons who won their spurs on the tented field, and I can't stand anything shoppy."

"That is very foolish of you," said Ethel. "There may be as much good breeding and gentility behind a counter as in a drawing-room."

Sir Brandon shook his head.

"We will not argue that point, if you please," he rejoined, "because you will never convince me, and a woman convinced against her will is of the same opinion still."

"I see your idea," Ethel observed. "If you were to marry a shop-girl you would imagine her saying, if she handed you a light for your cigar, 'What is the next article, sir?'"

"Precisely. Horrid idea, isn't it?"

"The contemplation of such a thing must be very dreadful to a man of your aristocratic proclivities."

She looked at him quite seriously, but there was a suspicion in his mind that she was laughing in her sleeve and quietly making fun of him.

"Will you kindly post that letter for me?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"When you can spare a little time I shall be very glad of your society," he continued. "Remember, I am an invalid, and shall feel grateful for such mercies."

Ethel nodded and rejoined her mother, who was anxious to know how she had progressed with the baronet. She was as much surprised as Ethel had been to hear that Mr. Clews was Sir Brandon's solicitor, and that he had asked him to come down.

"We shall be found out, mamma," said Ethel. "It is always the way with people who stoop to deceit. I wish I had been straightforward."

"No matter, we shall get our annuity," Mrs. Arbuthnot replied.

"That is all you think of. For my part I shall refuse it."

"I will accept it. What a perverse girl you are. I am sure I don't see why we should not take advantage of his good nature."

Ethel would not discuss the matter with her mother, and the subject dropped. All the rest of the evening she kept on thinking how ashamed she would be when Sir Brandon discovered that she had been tricking him.

At one time she had a strong inclination to go and confess that she was Ethel Arbuthnot, but she had not courage enough to do so. The letter was posted, and she had to patiently await the coming of Mr. Clews.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PLOT.

In every realm, 'neath every clime,
As onward rolls the course of time,
The love of gold, with fatal sway,
Allures the souls of men away.

SHELLEY.

THOUGH Herbert Gordon had quitted England after being denounced by Charles Palethorpe, he had by no means forgotten Ethel, who was still the one bright guiding star on which his mind's eye was constantly fixed.

Night and day he plotted to get her into his power.

He was afraid to go back to his own country, because he thought that Ethel might have him arrested for the attacks on the two Palethorpes—father and son. Even if the prosecution broke down on her unsupported testimony, as he thought it would, the disgrace and exposure of a criminal trial would be terrible for a man in his position.

After visiting Paris and Venice he found himself at a favourite resort of his, the little gaming town of Monaco, the only place in Europe where public and authorised gambling was at that time permitted. He was always fond of high play, for the excitement pleased him, and, as a rule, he was a very lucky player.

It had fallen to his lot on one occasion to break the bank, and if he lost large sums one night he gained them back the next. One night he noticed a young Englishman of gentlemanly appearance, who was extremely dejected, for he had lost heavily.

His face was pale and haggard; his eyes burned with an unnatural lustre, and there was a wild, reckless expression about him which Herbert had seen before at the tables, and knew how to interpret.

That expression meant despair and death. He saw the young man go out into the garden, and felt positive that he had lost his last shilling and intended to commit suicide. Herbert immediately followed him, and saw him take a seat in the garden, selecting a secluded spot, where he deemed he would be free from interruption. Then he beheld, in the soft moonlight, the gleam of a pistol.

"Hold!" he cried, appearing suddenly in front of the wretched victim of misery and despair.

The young man dropped the pistol and stared vacantly at him.

"Who are you, and why do you come between me and the death I seek?" he asked.

"Because I wish to be your friend."

The man laughed in a hollow, sepulchral manner, which grated harshly on the ear.

"I have no friends," he replied. "My last friend was a piece of gold, and it went over the table just now by the aid of the croupier's rake."

"Why do you want to die?"

"I am penniless. In three days I have lost a fortune."

"Do you wish to gain a thousand pounds?" asked Herbert.

"Do I? It would start me in the world again. I am not really tired of the world, but I have not the courage to face poverty."

"Few men have," replied Herbert. "Tell me your name. I will help you."

"I am Edward Charrington. My father left me a fortune six months ago, which I have squandered like an idiot."

"The old story," said Herbert. "However, this may be a lesson to you."

"What am I to do for you?" asked Mr. Charrington. "Young as I am, I know enough of the world to be sure that people do not give money away for nothing."

"You are right, and the remark does credit to your perception. What I want you to do for the money I have promised you is very simple."

"Name it."

"In a rural district in England, residing with her mother in a lonely house, is a young lady who married me; but for foolish reasons of her own, decline, to live with me. I require you to carry her off and bring her to me at a chateau in France which I own, and the address of which I will give you. My plan is this: I will forge two medical certificates. You can say she is mad, and no one will help her."

Charrington listened attentively, and when Herbert had ended, he made a gesture of impatience.

"My dear sir," he said "you seem to forget that I am a gentleman."

"What of that?"

"This that you ask me to do is the act of a scoundrel."



[AN ASSUMED PART.]

Herbert Gordon pointed to the pistol which remained on the ground.

"Take up your weapon," he exclaimed. "I am sorry I interrupted you."

With these words he was about to walk away when Charrington seized his arm.

"Hold!" he cried. "Better villany than death!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Herbert. "I thought you would reconsider your determination. Pride is all very well, but poverty levels pride, and the grave levels all."

"Yes," answered Charrington, in a melancholy tone of voice, "beggars must not be choosers. I accept your offer. When shall I start?"

"Come to my hotel to-morrow for instructions," said Herbert. "Ask for Mr. Gordon. Here is a bank-note for you. Keep away from the tables."

The young man thanked his tempter, and the next minute he was alone. The task he had undertaken was very repulsive to him, yet he was in such a position that there was no escape. It was not without reason that the gipsy had warned Ethel, and there was something in her superstition about the flickering flame of a bluish tint which hovers over a newly made grave, and which she termed a corpse candle. The following day saw the plot fully arranged. Herbert Gordon owned a chateau on the French coast, and it was near Dieppe, to which place Ethel was to be brought by steamer. Medical certificates were prepared, and well supplied with money, Edward Charrington started on his nefarious errand.

On reaching Morecambe, he walked over to the Woodruffe estate to make inquiries as to the position of Brook Cottage, it being his intention to drive up in a carriage some day as it was growing dusk and carry her off to the railway station, from whence he would take her to New Haven, en route for Dieppe.

He was sadly in want of an assistant, some unscrupulous ruffian, who would act and look like the keeper of some lunatic asylum, but

where to look for one he did not know. During his walk, Fate threw him in the way of the very man he required, for he saw Ezra the gipsy sitting on a stone outside the mine making clothes pegs for his wife and daughter to sell. Struck by his ferocious appearance, he paused.

"My man," he exclaimed, "do you want a job?"

"If it pays well," replied Ezra, "I am not at all particular what kind of a job it is."

"What are you?"

"A gipsy."

"That is another name for a thief!" remarked Charrington.

"The Gitano must live," replied Ezra, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

"Can I trust you?"

"With anything but money," the gipsy said, with a low laugh.

"Good. You shall have fifty pounds if you will help me to carry off a girl who we shall say is mad, and when we get her over to France I will give you the cash."

"All expenses paid?"

"Every farthing. I am the doctor, you the keeper of the asylum, do you see?"

"Perfectly. I'm your man. Where does she live?"

"At Brook Cottage near here."

"When do we start?" asked Ezra.

"To-morrow. Be here at four o'clock. My carriage shall stop to pick you up. Is it a bargain?" asked Charrington.

"It is."

Satisfied with the arrangement he had made, Edward Charrington returned to Morecambe, and he had no sooner disappeared in the distance than Ezra went to the shaft of the mine and descended. His wife looked reproachfully at him.

"A lot of skewers you've made," she observed; "we have to do all the work to keep a lazy fellow like you in idleness."

"Peace!" said Ezra, frowning; "I've been making money."

"How?"

"I'm to have fifty pounds for a three days' job, and run no risk either."

The woman's manner changed at this welcome intelligence, and her curiosity being aroused, she continued to question him.

"Tell me all about it," she exclaimed.

"You women can't keep your mouths shut," he replied. "Will you promise not to blab if I let you know?"

Madge willingly gave the required promise, though she made a mental reservation that she would exercise her own discretion in keeping it.

"We're going to pretend that the girl up at the cottage is mad and carry her off to France. It will be a fine joke," he said.

"Miss Ethel mad?" repeated Madge. "Why she is as sane as you or I."

"Of course, but that is the plan."

"I knew the corpse candles spoke the truth," remarked Madge. "Poor girl, she is destined to have her share of trouble. I saw it in the lines of her hand."

"We all have trouble, don't we? That's what we are born to," answered the gipsy.

"Give up this idea, Ezra. Don't do it," urged Madge.

"What! give up fifty pounds!" he said, with a harsh laugh. "What do you take me for? I wasn't born yesterday. Why do you ask such a silly thing?"

"I scarcely know," replied Madge; "but the girl is so young, pretty and innocent."

"If she was twice as pretty and innocent I'd cut her throat for the same money!" cried the gipsy, with an oath.

Taking up a bottle of whisky, he applied it to his lips, consuming a deep draught of the burning spirit without as much as winking his eyes. Madge urged him no further, for she knew his disposition, but when she got an opportunity she emerged from the mine and took the road across the fields to Brook Cottage.

"At least I will try to save her," she murmured.

(To be Continued.)



[THE MYSTERY.]

UNDER A LOVE CHARM; OR, A SECRET WRONG.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Christine's Revenge; or, O'Hara's Wife,"

"The Mystery of His Love; or, Who Married Them?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WITCH.

I love thee, I love thee,
Oh let that suffice!
See, question my soul,
Read the truth in mine eyes.

"ATHELSTANE RODNEY, why do you look at me so strangely? Has sorrow so hardened your heart against me?"

Athelstane could not believe his senses; surely his ears and his eyes deceived him? Clemence Melrose had never in her life looked at him as she was looking now. Those eyes, dark as night, and those lips, "red as winter haws" (how sweet because so true are some of those old poetic similes), had never beamed and smiled before as they did now. No, not upon Horace even during those days when her flirtation with the handsome young cavalry officer had nearly driven his brother frantic. No, she had never looked at Horace as she looked at Athelstane now, or if she had Athelstane had never seen her. But what lights flashed in the depths of those eyes! What fathomless wells of love and a divine tenderness such as few human eyes are capable of expressing were manifest to him as he looked at the "dream maiden," for so he still often called her in his thoughts, and a great wonderment filled his

soul. She had actually knelt at his feet and she took his hand to prevent his rising.

"It is fitting that I should kneel to you," she said, in tones that sounded to him like sweet music, "for I have hidden my love and tortured you so long. I am sick of this coquette's life, with its mean, base triumphs over true hearts. I tried hard to make you suffer. I treated you with contempt and disdain when my heart owned no other master. At last I could bear it no longer. I said to myself, 'He whom I love and who loves me shall suffer no more. I will go to him and tell him that the cruel game is over—that my love shall be no longer hidden.' Athelstane, Athelstane, I love you with my whole heart and soul!"

How was it that the maddening ecstasy of bliss which filled the soul of Athelstane Rodney had mixed with it a something mysterious, dark, inscrutable, and allied to—what? in the name of all the mysteries that ever made life mystical since the world began? Long afterwards Athelstane recalled his mingled sensations on that night, with a thrill of love, pity, and fear. His rash, fatal vow, that he would make Clemence his wife in spite of the world, in spite almost of her own will—that he would conquer her and make her his, was it about to be fulfilled? and if so what would be the consequences? For a moment surprise seemed to take away from him the power of speech. At last he said:

"Are you mocking me?"

"You must know that it is not so," she answered; "but perhaps I have tried your love too long. It may be that you have steeled your heart so against me that now it refuses to let me in. I may knock in vain at the door of that heart and find it closed against me. Is it so? Have my coquetries, my love of torturing, lost me in the end all that makes life worth having? Answer me, Athelstane; you will then have the satisfaction of knowing that I will die, yes, die, for your sake. When I love my love will be 'deep as the sea.' I have always said this to myself from a child, and when I first saw

you I said to my heart, 'Heart, you have found your master.'"

Then Athelstane folded the maiden of his dreams in his arms and rained down burning kisses upon her lips, and he told her of the love which had consumed him ever since he had first met her, and of the faithful devotion of his whole future life to her service. What need to repeat those love words, which nearly all have uttered at some period of their lives?—words often meant at the time, but forgotten as time passed away, laughed at, perchance, as follies in maturer years. And was this to be the case with Athelstane Rodney? Had anyone suggested the idea he would have been filled with wrath and contempt. Had not Clemence alone filled his mind and heart and soul for weeks? Was she not the most entrancingly beautiful creature under the sun? Was she not like the impersonation of Byron's Haidee, with her golden hair, great black eyes, and complexion of blush rose purity? And she loved him! oh, ecstasy incomprehensible! After all these weeks of torment she loved him. He could not for a moment doubt that when he felt her closely clinging white arms wound round his neck, and felt her lips returning his burning kisses.

"Faithful unto death, my Athelstane," Miss Melrose said; "but our love, our engagement, must be kept secret from my haughty, ambitious friends. I shall have a fortune of three thousand a year in two years time that nobody can keep me out of. But my love is not a patient love; I cannot wait so long to call you mine. We will marry soon after we return to town in some old city church where we are not known, and we will contrive somehow to spend a few days in the country or elsewhere, but after that I am afraid we must part until I come into my money."

"Not if you are once my wife, never, never," Athelstane answered. "As for your money, I hate the thought of it. I will not touch a penny of it. Let it be settled on yourself and your children."

The answer of Clemence struck Athelstane at the time and afterwards as strange in the extreme.

"Do as you like, my love," she said; "but you did not say that the last time that we spoke of this. Then I thought you seemed too anxious about my money."

"I," he answered, "I, who never gave the dirty money one thought? You make me out to be a money-grubber, my love. What do you mean?"

She wrenched herself out of his arms, and to his surprise and concern sank down upon a low stool before the fire, buried her face in her hands, and gave way to a violent fit of weeping. He knelt down by her side and strove, with the greatest affection, to soothe her. He used every endearing word, but poor Clemence continued to weep. At last she said:

"You will make me obey you as well as love you, I see that; but promise me that our marriage shall not be long delayed. My parents are far too worldly and ambitious to permit me to marry you; they think so much of aristocratic birth and blood. I do not, but they do."

Athelstane winced. His father, own brother to Sir Robert, could have boasted a longer descent, counting from the Norman knights De Rodnès, as the name was spelt in the eleventh century, than Clemence Melrose, with her father's more modern title, which only dated from the days of the eighth Henry, when a certain James Melrose had been created a baron; the earldom of Harcourt had been conferred by Queen Anne. But Athelstane supposed that Clemence was alluding to the fact of his mother having been the daughter of a poor country curate, who had no aristocratic connections to boast of, and much as he adored Miss Melrose, he thought she wanted good taste. The more he thought of that speech the more grieved he became. Horace was likewise descended on the maternal side from the country curate, and yet Lord and Lady Melrose had been quite willing that Clemence should marry Horace. True, his brother was the acknowledged heir of Sir Robert, but as it stood poor Horace could never represent the head of the family. Athelstane, hating the thought of stepping into Horace's shoes, was still the heir, and if the parents had been willing that Clemence should marry his brother what objection could there possibly be to him?

"Your parents would soon consent to our marriage," he began.

"Never! never!" she interrupted; "you know nothing of the world if you fancy that. No! no! our marriage must be secret. We go away to-morrow early in the morning. You must not object to part with me as if we were acquaintances. Before the others I must appear as if I were quite indifferent to you, and you must not resent it—indeed you must not."

"I will do as you wish, my darling."

Athelstane did not wish for any more discussion. Clemence loved him, and he was in that happy heyday of love when the lover is only too willing to submit in all things to the will of the beloved one. Clemence once more wound her arms about his neck and rested her cheek against his, and spoke to him in low, dulcet tones.

"We are going back to town, love," she said, "and you will soon be coming there also, and you will meet me at the National Gallery or in the parks sometimes. You will call at our house in St. James's Square, but not often, and you will arrange all things for our marriage."

At that moment poor Horace uttered a pitiful, moaning sound. Clemence uttered a little shriek, and covered her eyes with her hands.

"I can't bear it," she said. "I can't bear to think of that. I must go. Nobody knows I have been here; it would look so strange if it were known. Good-bye, my love."

"Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye," quoted Athelstane, still holding his beloved to his heart.

But he felt that if Doctor Finucan or the other doctor, who was sleeping in the house, or the nurse, or indeed anybody, should take it into their heads to come into the room, that it would be very awkward for this most adorable

—most bewitching—most beautiful maiden, so he released her, and she fled noiselessly along the thickly-carpeted corridor.

Athelstane then went to the bedside of his brother. Horace lay with the same stony look of apathy on his beautiful young face. How white he was; how fearful to reflect that he knew nothing; that in all human probability he never would know anything again as long as he lived.

"I could almost wish him dead rather than see him like this," was the thought of Athelstane.

And while his heart beat and his veins tingled with the excitement and the rapture of knowing that his love was returned, that he had won the beautiful Clemence for his promised bride, a pang shot through him when he thought of Horace.

"He loved her, and she fooled him—never cared one farthing for him. He was heir to Wolvermoor, and to all the pleasures that the riches and honours of this world afford when joined to youth and health; and yet there he lies, smitten by some cruel hand, and it seems to me that I have usurped his place. Oh! Horace brother, forgive my angry, jealous feelings. I was so mad with you in regard to that Margaret Bainton; and it seems as if it were she indeed who has taken this fearful vengeance. Oh, Horace, what would I give if I could hear you say I forgive you."

Athelstane spoke aloud. A sob close to his ear caused him to start and exclaim. He thought he should see Clemence again at his side. That young lady had indeed left the door open, and Athelstane had forgotten to close it. He now turned, and saw, instead of the lovely Clemence, his somewhat homely-looking cousin, Eva.

She wore a long, plain serge dress, with a girdle round the waist, and a large cape; her hair was all bound up under a net cap; her face was red and swollen with weeping. Eva did not look in the least attractive.

"Good gracious, Eva, it is nearly two o'clock. You will kill yourself if you do not take more rest, my dear."

"Ah, Athelstane, you did not send that girl away—that shameless girl, who has been in this room with you so long. I watched her in—I watched her out. Yes, and—" here she looked defiantly at her cousin—"I listened at the door. I heard her tell you she loved you; I heard her call you darling; I heard you swear to be faithful to her as long as you lived; I heard her tell you that she would part with you in the morning as if you were strangers. Oh, the deceit and wickedness of that girl. It is something fearful to think of, it is indeed, Athelstane."

Athelstane was quite pale with anger. That his cousin should dare to watch him and act the spy enraged him terribly. It was a moment or so before he could speak. Then he said, scornfully:

"Perhaps Miss Eva Rodney will condescend to tell me by what right she constitutes herself my judge, and sets herself the task of spying out my conduct? I love Miss Melrose with my whole heart. She loves me, and nothing in this world shall separate us—no mortal power; that is—"

"Ah! she is more than mortal—she is a witch!" cried Eva, in excitement. "I have set myself the task of watching her, and I have heard her at her incantations. She is allied to the powers of evil. Where do you suppose this girl whom you so love is now at this moment? Do you think she is in her sleeping chamber, as a modest maiden should be? She is not; she has gone out of the house. I am quite sure that woman is a sort of fiend. I have heard a story about her that would make your hair stand on end; but you would not believe me. Oh! Athelstane, the time will come when you will be grateful to me instead of angry—when you remember that I warned you about Miss Melrose."

Athelstane only paid attention to one portion of Eva's speech. It was to the assertion that Clemence had gone out of the house. He put his hand on his cousin's shoulder.

"Tell me," he said; "what do you mean by

saying that she—Clemence—is not now in her sleeping room?"

"I mean, Athelstane, exactly what I say. Clemence, as you call her"—with a mocking emphasis on the Christian name of Athelstane's beloved—"Clemence, as you call her, went out into the grounds by a side door in the brown corridor that leads into the shrubbery. I watched her, and there she is now at this moment pacing up and down. I have watched her from my window. If you wait you will see her come up again presently, looking pale and calm as any saint. Oh, the deceitful hussy!"

"Why deceitful?" asked Athelstane. "You do not, you dare not insinuate that Clemence is not as good, as pure as a maiden should be; that she steals out of the house in the dead of the night to meet some wretched clandestine lover? Surely fate would never mock me or any honest man with such a catastrophe; the bare thought is madness. Speak, Eva?"

Athelstane laid a firm but anger-nerved hand on his cousin's arm.

"Speak," he said. "Don't keep me in suspense! What do you mean by saying that Clemence is now in the grounds alone and unprotected at two o'clock in the morning in mid-winter? It is preposterous! It is impossible!"

"It is preposterous but it is not impossible!" Eva answered, calmly, and she laid hold of Athelstane's grasping hand with her own slender but strong fingers. "Release me, cousin," she said. "You hurt me, Athelstane."

Athelstane at once relinquished his hold of Eva's arm.

"Forgive me," he said; "but you drive me mad, you do indeed. What do you insinuate about Clemence? I must know! Tell me!"

"I can only tell you that she has a secret, and it is dark and dreadful. She is not the innocent maiden you suppose her to be; she is a woman within a past, and a tragic and stormy one. It is fearful to think that she has won your love. I believe—yes, I verily believe you would lay down your life to serve her. Yes, even if you knew all."

"If? Yes, for what would my life be worth to me if she were faithless. Yes, if you talked for ever to me you would not change my love for her into contempt or indifference, for it is part of myself."

Eva turned away her head very impatiently and walked up the room holding her hands clasped before her.

"I see that it is useless, Athelstane; go your own way, I have tried to save you but it is impossible. You must go on to the bitter end. Wed your divinity. Ha, ha! what a bride you will have won! The queen of three London seasons, the belle of London society, the queen of beauty and of fashion; but, oh, what a broken-hearted wretch you will be even then, Athelstane, cousin to whom I have given my foolish heart, even then I will be your friend; yes, your faithful friend until death. There is no limit, cousin, to what a woman will do and dare and endure for one whom she loves, and so—"

Eva put her hand to her wildly throbbing heart, striving so to still its beatings, and she drew a long, painful breath that was half a sob.

"And so," she continued, "when she is your wife and she is driving you frantic come to me under any circumstances and I will help you to the utmost limit of my power. Good night, now, Athelstane, and may Heaven have pity on you and bless you."

Eva passed swiftly out of the room. Athelstane was left alone with the staring, helpless Horace; the fire burnt red in the low grate, the lights burned dim. Athelstane paced the room with long strides, the ominous warnings of Eva disturbed his mind, and excited his brain and his nerves, both of which were in an unhealthy state through distress of mind and want of sleep.

"Clemence, Clemence; I will watch—I must watch, I will be outside the door of her chamber. I will—Hark, is that her footstep?"

He stole out of the room without taking a light, and he heard distinctly a sound of foot-

steps ascending the carpeted staircase, another moment and Clemence—yes, it was Clemence, appeared at the head of the stairs, in one hand she held a shaded lamp, in the other an open book.

Something in her queen-like step and haughty attitude kept him back, and inspired him with a great and nameless awe; he would no more have dared now to interrupt Clemence, or speak to her even, than he would have dared intrude some paltry business upon the notice of some widowed queen returning from the funeral of a beloved spouse. How was it—what was it in the name of the mystical that filled those divinely lovely eyes of Clemence Melrose as with a strange and unearthly radiance?

She was pale, lovelier than the morning star, and she passed him by, close by without once seeing him, and so went on and entered her room, while Athelstane watched her from a distance, and she closed her door firmly and softly, and listening outside like one spell-bound in an evil dream he heard her turn the key in the lock.

The next day all the Melrose family left Wolvermoor for London.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LEONTINE MELOSE.

Time and chance are but a tide,
Slighted love is hard to bide.

ROBERT BURNS.

WEEKS, weeks, weeks, dreary winter weeks—how they have followed one another like a flock of crows flying home to roost in the churchyard elms. All black and monotonous, and all the while I have heard as it were the sound of their mournful cawing every day has seemed to say: 'Like the last, like the last, like the last, no change, nothing brighter, no hope. Oh, this weary, weary life. Will he never come back, and if he does will there be any kindness, any look that answers the wild question my heart is for ever asking? Does he love me?'

This rhapsody is a portion of a young girl's diary, a couple of leaves of her self communings. The girl is Leontine Melrose. Life in St. Charles Street, Bayswater, has been melancholy and sad for those long cold weeks of midwinter during which Athelstane has been away at Wolvermoor. Poverty has laid her cold, hard hand upon the threshold of the poor home like the shadow of the Raven of Edgar Poe's great fantastic poem—the shadow of the evil thing called poverty has rested over the doorway, and the beak of the bird of ill omen is in the hearts of all the Melrose family. They owe far more than they can pay, and the grocer now refuses to trust.

Mr. William Melrose only earns one hundred pounds a year, and Leontine earns about twenty. This pitiful sum has to pay the rent, clothe, and feed seven persons, while all the money that Mrs. Rodney pays monthly has to be applied to purchasing the furniture for her rooms on the new hire system.

There are times in the lives of most of us mortals when circumstances seem to combine against us as if to overwhelm us in one black ruin. Everything goes wrong; every face is turned against us. Overhead is a dark sky which shuts out the heavens. We look around and see no break, not one gleam of hope in all that darkness, and then suddenly there is light upon our path, and the angel of hope descends and stands close to us, and whispers to us to be of good cheer.

It was a January night, and the bitter north wind was howling down the desolate empty suburban streets. The pavements were sprinkled with snow. It was a fine, cheerful night for the gay and young; and rich—a night for Christmas iced cakes and candied fruits and twelfth night kings and queens for the little ones, and of dances and soft flirtations and wanderings through warmed and lighted con-

servatories for the elder maidens; a night for aldermen to give great repasts, and married dames to show off their velvets and their diamonds; a fine night for the rich, but Leontine Melrose sat sobbing in a little shabby armchair by the side of her small shabby bedstead, which with its scant and narrow bedclothes she shared with her little eldest half sister.

That young person lay now very soundly asleep in the said shabby bed; her legs were right across it. Milly Melrose was noted as a "kicker;" she was a young person of great views as regarded "space" after her eyelids were once sealed down by the goddess of sleep, and poor Leontine was frequently awakened by finding the heels of Miss Milly close to her mouth or eyes.

Milly had been happily asleep for hours dreaming, as she informed Leontine in the morning, that they had roast chicken and damson pudding for supper, and that she and her sister were to have new green velvet dresses.

Leontine is cold; she shivers. She is wrapped in a poor little shawl put over her poor dress that she usually wears in the house when her teaching is over. She has just been writing down these fanciful and perhaps foolish lines with which this chapter opened. She leans her pretty head on her pretty hand and sighs.

That day Mrs. Watson, the lady in St. John's Wood where Leontine teaches daily, has told her that after that week she will not require her services, since she is actually going to reside in Germany with her family. So Leontine will not have one shilling to call her own; she has very few now, and her step-mother has been saying that afternoon "that the sooner they all go to the workhouse the better."

Leontine has not heard one word of Mr. Athelstane Rodney since he left except that he has been "enjoying himself immensely." Mrs. Rodney has told her that. She has not seen a newspaper for the last week, neither has her father, and thus it happens that she is quite ignorant of the dreadful fate which has befallen Horace Rodney, and she little dreams that Athelstane is now virtually the heir to his uncle's title and estates.

All at once came a light, sharp rap on the door of the room. Leontine started, hurried away her diary, then went and opened the door and found standing in the passage no less a person than Mrs. Rodney's confidential servant.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Melrose, but Mrs. Rodney wishes very much to speak to you if you could make it convenient just to step down for five minutes."

"I—I was just going to bed," said Leontine, "and it is eleven o'clock, and I have this shabby dress on."

"No matter at all, Miss Melrose, if you don't mind, for Mrs. Rodney thought almost you were in bed until she heard you stir."

"Well," said Leontine, "I will come down," and accordingly she followed the confidential maid into the sitting-room of Mrs. Rodney.

She found that lady lounging in an armchair before a bright fire; an open letter lay on her lap.

"Won't you take a glass of wine, Miss Melrose?" said the mother of Athelstane; "you look so cold."

Leontine thanked her, and accepted. She really did feel cold and sad and faint. All the while that she was sipping the wine she was looking at the open letter which the elder lady was reading and re-reading, and she was wondering what news it could possibly contain that could affect her. At last Mrs. Rodney looked up and said:

"You have an engagement—a daily engagement. Is it a very valuable one, Miss Melrose?"

"I no longer have it; I have lost it," Leontine said, quickly.

"Ah! then that is quite fortunate in one sense. I will read you what my son Athelstane says about you. I suppose you have heard of the terrible affliction that has fallen on me, Miss Melrose. My son Horace, my eldest son, heir

to the baronetcy, has been set on by some villainous peasants—those Yorkshire peasants are so revengeful—and almost killed. He will never be able to write a letter or stand upright, or even speak again as long as he lives."

"Good heavens!" cried Leontine. "Oh, dear madame, and this is your son! How have you borne it?"

Mrs. Rodney wept a little, and dried her still fine eyes on a fine cambric handkerchief. The reader may remember that Horace had gone to live with Sir Robert while yet a very young child, and thus it may have happened that his mother's heart had cooled towards him; but indeed Mrs. Rodney's heart was not a very warm one at any time. She was, of course, shocked and grieved at what had befallen her son; but she could not forget that Athelstane, in whose faith and generosity she had every confidence, was now the heir to the wealth and title, and she felt that personally she would be a gainer by the property changing hands.

Had poor Horace Rodney become Sir Horace there is not much probability that he would have troubled himself to look after the well-being of his mother, or indeed of anybody save himself.

"We must learn as we advance in life to support these trials with firmness," said Mrs. Rodney, and then she continued, "Now I will read you what Athelstane says: 'My aunt is very much upset by what has happened. Alice is going into Scotland on a long visit, the shock of this has so shaken her nerves. There remains only Eva, who is always busy in the house and in the parish. Lady Rodney said she would give the world to find a quiet, ladylike, well-principled young person as a companion, and she would give fifty pounds a year, and of course every home comfort. Ask Miss Melrose if she would like to undertake the situation. The duties will be light.'"

Leontine asked herself one question when this offer was made to her, and the question was this:

"Will he be there?"

The next moment Mrs. Rodney answered it.

"My son will be a great deal at Wolvermoor, off and on; but he will not abandon his studies at the bar. Although he is now Sir Robert's heir he will be often in London. I may tell you"—looking up at Leontine with searching, rather cruel eyes—"I may tell you that my son is engaged to be married. He says nothing of it; but my niece Alice has found it out somehow. It seems he is engaged to Miss Melrose, daughter of Lord Melrose."

The hot blood from a jealous heart dyed the fair cheek of Leontine.

"My father is the true Lord Melrose," she said. "Some day it will all be found out."

"Ah, well, perhaps it will be," Mrs. Rodney answered, languidly. "But the old earl must acknowledge your father first, must he not, and disinherit his present heir? I would not build on anything so unlikely were I in your place. I hope you will make a conquest of some rich man. Why don't you try?"

But Leontine was thinking of her chance-meeting with her beautiful black-eyed, golden-haired cousin on the night when that young lady's humble lady friend was murdered, and she remembered the scorn with which the beautiful aristocrat had repudiated the idea that her name could be spelled like that of the young person "who played the music," as Doctor Finucan phrased it.

"And so he loves her?" the girl said to her suffering heart. "Her and her father stands in the place where mine should stand. She holds the fortune, the position, which should be mine, and now she has won the heart of Athelstane—that heart which I once almost dreamed was mine."

She looked down at the carpet with her heart and mind in a tumult and chaos of thought. She was roused by Mrs. Rodney saying, quite sharply:

"Well, I suppose the position then is not good enough for you? Am I to tell Mr. Rodney so?"

"Tell Mr. Rodney," answered Leontine, "I

thank him much, and I will accept the offer. I can help my father then."

"But you will have to dress well," said Mrs. Rodney, sharply. "You can't occupy a position of that kind unless you are well dressed, so you must not send your father all you earn."

"Not all," said Leontine; "but I am sure I can dress myself well on twenty pounds a year."

"Well, if you like to accept the situation it is yours," said Mrs. Rodney.

And so the bargain was completed.

Lady Rodney sent Leontine fifteen pounds wherewith to purchase a few suitable dresses in which to make her first appearance in polite society. Just as these were made up came a telegram telling Miss Melrose not to start on the day appointed, since the family were coming to town, and she was to join them at the house they had taken, furnished, from their country neighbour, Sir Peter Lingham, a fine old house in Cavendish Square.

Owing to the delicate health of Lady Rodney, Sir Robert had not regularly occupied his fine large house in Park Lane. For years the furniture had been all either disposed of or taken to Wolvermoor, and the house let on a term of years, and frequently during the London season. Lady Rodney had spent all the gay months at Wolvermoor, while her daughters had been chaperoned by some one or other of their fashionable friends at whose house they had visited, but now Sir Robert had actually taken the grand old furnished house of Sir Peter for six months—namely, from February till August.

Sir Peter had been so long away from England that he was determined, he said, to spend quite six months at his noble Yorkshire house, Hazlemere Hall. Little did Leontine Melrose dream how all these arrangements with which she had apparently nothing to do were to affect her future life. One chance hangs on to another in the perplexing chain of events that binds our mysterious human lives into shapes and sequences that form a story.

Leontine had orders to go that very afternoon to nineteen, Cavendish Square and see that tea was prepared for Lady Rodney and Miss Rodney in the back library called the Chintz room by five o'clock in the afternoon. The invalid lady and her eldest daughter (Alice was in Scotland) were to arrive at half-past four. Sir Robert with Athelstane and Horace, the invalid, was travelling by slow and easy stages to London.

There was a certain Sir Fulke Wraymouth, a very great American doctor, who had consented to become a naturalised subject of England, and even to accept the honour of knighthood from the Queen as a mark of her esteem, since he had effected an almost miraculous cure on a valued member of her household.

This great man was now a rage in London; he had no time to go into the provinces, and Sir Robert had taken it into his head that he would be able to effect a cure on his favourite.

"So that in a day or so I shall see him," said Leontine to herself.

Poor child, she had spent as little on her new dresses as she possibly could, while she still managed to appear attired in ladylike, graceful fashion. Five pounds of the fifteen which Lady Rodney had sent her she had given to her father. She wound her arms about his neck, bade him adieu, kissed her little half sisters and her step-mother (Cesar was not at home) and then she stepped into the cab, which conveyed her and her trunk to the Westbourne Park Station.

Athelstane's mother had told her that it would now be always necessary for her to travel first class, so she took her place in a luxurious compartment. There was only one passenger in the carriage besides herself, an old man with white hair, leering, wicked eyes, false teeth, and a gold headed cane. As soon as the train moved on he turned towards Leontine and said with a fearful mocking politeness:

"Will you allow me to close the window?"
"No, thank you," said Leontine in alarm.
Somehow the old man frightened her.

(To be Continued.)

THE FORCED MARRIAGE;

—OR—

JEW AND GENTILE.

CHAPTER VI.

THE funeral of John Aveling was over. The body of the financial potentate had been consigned to that grave to which the millionaire as well as the beggar must descend, and in Ashurst, his deserted home, a solemn hush prevailed as though the chill of death had not yet been warmed by the returning tide of ordinary life.

The stately, luxurious rooms were still darkened, or at least the bright outer sunshine but feebly struggled into them through the heavy damask curtains drawn close before the windows; the servants moved noiselessly about, speaking in whispered tones, while those who came and went to and fro from the house had the appearance of persons who had been chilled and subdued by the recent presence of the dead.

In a remote room of the house—which, by the way, was a large, irregular structure, at some distance from the metropolis, built and furnished with every suburban acquisition—sat Mark Upton, silent, moody and dispirited. His face was haggard and his whole appearance presented that aspect of limpness and weakness which follow severe mental trial or exertion.

Though the occupants of the house knew it not save by his altered looks, the past three days had been to Mark Upton of the sort which age a man more than years of ordinary life, for in those few sunrises and sunsets he had waged a hard fight with bitter disappointment, baffled avarice and soul corroding envy.

The servants of the house, as they met him in his restless wanderings about the place, looked at him pityingly, supposing that the death of his generous patron—the uncle upon whom he had so zealously and faithfully attended—had wrought this change; and even Edward Aveling himself, noting the suffering countenance, the suddenly emaciated frame and unsteady steps, felt his resentment grow less, and thus the first step towards reconciliation proved not quite so galling as he had anticipated.

The cousins did not meet until the day of John Aveling's funeral, for neither wished to hasten the moment when he should encounter the guilty eye of the other. It needed all Edward's nerve and all Upton's self-control to endure their first interview, for in the mind of both their last meeting at the house of Levy was uppermost, and that rencontre seemed all the more trying and disgraceful in contrast with the solemn announcement which terminated it.

That both had suffered keenly was evident as the two men looked into each other's faces. The sight of Upton's suffering aspect, as we have said, softened the hatred of his younger cousin, but Edward Aveling's pale face and hollow eyes did not produce the same effect upon the other.

Instead, he secretly rejoiced at these tokens of distress, for they revealed to him a capacity for suffering which he had not hitherto suspected, and he vengefully resolved that he would tax such sensibility to the utmost.

So now the pale, wan, haggard man sat in his remote room poring over neglects which he mistook for wrongs; slights which he looked upon as crimes; and in his disappointment and rage he was planning new enterprises of signal depth and perplexity.

"Of what use has been all my scheming, my self-sacrifice, and my deep laid plans?" he thought. "I toiled early and late. I planned better than ever man planned before; success seemed certain. I had it in my grasp, when death snatched it from me. Had he but lived an hour, a half, a quarter of an hour longer, all would have been well. The new will was already prepared; it lacked nothing but his signature, and that could have been so easily added, had it not been for that fatal, that unnecessary scene. Why did I not foresee the result of Edward's violence? Why did I not smother my own resentment, as I had so often done before, and still soothe the old man, and put off the younger one? Then this catastrophe would have been averted, and when death did arrive it would have found me master of Ashurst, and not this scoundrelly Aveling, who has forfeited his inheritance a thousandfold. If I had only been a little more or a little less cautious; if I had only scanned a little closer the line which divides the possible from the impossible; if I had broached the subject of his signature a little sooner; or if I had waited until a different moment to fling that taunting threat at my cousin, all would still have gone well."

And thus for a long time the baffled schemer sat conning over the chances of what might have been. But presently his thoughts took a different turn, and his mind reached out into the future to see by what means he could lay hold upon new schemes.

He smiled with self-congratulatory pride as he remembered how shrewdly he had permitted his cousin to rush from his father's house into new and greater complications, even when that father lay dead.

He recollected how he had watched the harassed young man as he strode from the house, and how, secreted himself, he had heard the order to drive to Levy, the money-lender's; and thereby he knew that one of his most craftily-planned schemes would speedily be consummated.

Everything had gone as he had wished except that most important part of all—the signing of the new will—and towards that end every other plan had pointed. He thought again of his interview with the money-lender; of the marriage certificate, which was safe in his possession; and then he fell into deep speculations concerning his cousin's conduct respecting that ill-assorted alliance.

Aveling would never acknowledge it; of that Mark Upton was convinced; even his own thin lip curled with scorn as he thought of the miserable little creature whom his cousin had espoused; yet that smile turned to one of malice as he reflected upon the bitter blow it would be to the bridegroom's pride should the marriage be made public.

Mark Upton had it in his power to make that marriage public, and to prove it too; for had he not spent his few hoarded thousands to secure the certificate? The wealth he had hoped to make his own had eluded his grasp. Money was his idol; it must be obtained, and by what means was he to win it so congenial to his nature as by fraud, intimidation and double dealing?

So he would patiently bide his time. The moment would come when Edward Aveling would surely give half his fortune to get possession of that certificate, or, better still, he would extort from the wretched bridegroom from time to time such sums as would slowly and surely rob him of the wealth which rightfully belonged to the patient, faithful nephew, and not to the spendthrift son. Thus the crafty schemer plotted on.

Once he paused, for the thought of Levy arrested him, and stopped the flow of his self-assumed success. Would the money-lender anticipate his own designs, and would he employ the same threats to extort money from his quondam client?

The query chilled the avaricious heart of the man; but the next moment he discarded the suspicion as unfounded.

"No," he murmured, "Levy would not dare break his promise to me. He has solemnly agreed to leave the country and never return. He and I are already too well known to each other for my own ease of mind. With him out of the way I shall have the game in my own hands, and I shall bleed Edward Aveling as freely as I wish."

Upton remained silent for some moments, for a certain fact respecting his cousin perplexed him.

"It puzzles me," he presently murmured, "it puzzles me that my wild young relative seems to turn the cold shoulder upon his former boon companions. He has paid his debts of honour already, but I have noticed that those cormorants who fed upon his folly go away with crestfallen countenances. Perhaps he is meditating a pious 'reform,' and thinks to retrieve his past by sanctimonious good behaviour. Let him try that dodge. So weak a nature as his will not long hold out, and even if it does, my chances are improved; for the more sanctified he grows the less he will care to have this horribly scandalous marriage proclaimed to the world. No—no," he repeated, after a moment's reflection, "the game is all my own. Levy leaves the country to-day never to return, so all the profits of this business will be mine."

He took up the morning's paper which lay unopened upon the table. He turned to the shipping column to satisfy himself that the name of "Berthold Levy" was on the list of outgoing passengers; but, as his eye ran over the sheet in search of the item he wished, an announcement of another nature transfixed him with surprise.

It was a notice of the marriage of Edward Aveling and Rachael Levy, boldly, succinctly and truthfully set forth, with all the usual accompanying information.

The paper dropped from Upton's nerveless grasp, and for an instant he sat as if crushed by an overwhelming calamity. Only recently recovered from one shock, he was now visited by another of almost equal violence, and for a moment the baffled plotter was incapable of thought or movement.

At last by slow and even painful degrees it all became clear to him. He remembered how frequently Levy had complained of the expenses of the girl's keeping; he remembered the very arguments by which he had been influenced to consent to her marriage with the spendthrift, and now those very arguments started up to confound him; for had not the astute Israelite taken the surest means of ridding himself of a troublesome charge by thus publicly throwing her upon her husband?

The marriage certificate, which had been purchased at an exorbitant outlay of ill-spaced money, was now valueless; it was scarcely worth the paper upon which it was written. Upton's fine schemes of extortion fell to the ground like the card-houses which children build, and, falling into a species of despair, to which such natures are especially prone, the man threw himself back in his chair and wrestled in the torment of baffled hate and rage.

Yet how amply he would have been consoled if at that moment he could have witnessed a scene transpiring in that very house and not many yards distant from the chamber where he sat.

An adverse fate, or a merciless Nemesis, had planned a counter-stroke which he did not expect, and Edward Aveling was now reaping the first fruits of that whirlwind whose seeds he had sown with so lavish a hand.

The three days which had gone by since the death of John Aveling had been days of extreme anguish to his son, for death had brought him face to face with his real self, and he shuddered as he contemplated the ghastly image. The follies which had been so dear to him he now despised; his boon companions were now revealed to him in their true colours, and his present warmest desire was to atone for his past, to cancel its obligations, to forget it if he could, and henceforth lead a better life.

But this resolve required a degree of bravery which none save himself could comprehend, for

to no human ear had he yet confided all the dark secrets of his past.

The scene at the money-lender's recurred to him like a horrible nightmare. Heated by wine as he had been, driven to desperation by his pressing wants, he scarcely knew or realised his most alarming difficulty, but it was not long before he was brought to a keen sense of it.

Sitting alone in his own little parlour the morning after his father's burial, sad, pale and distraught, he was aroused from his melancholy reverie by the entrance of a servant with a message that visitors were below desirous of seeing him.

"Tell them I see no one," was the reply. "You had orders to that effect this morning."

"And so I told these people, sir, but they would not hear to your not being seen. Nothing would do but I must come and fetch you."

"Who and what are they?" demanded the young man, impatiently.

"I cannot tell, sir; they would not give their names, but their errand seems an important one."

A flush of annoyance passed over Aveling's face, for in such importunate visitors he doubted not he should discover certain adventurous creditors whose names would not bear repetition in that sombre, mourning house. So rising reluctantly and regretfully he descended to the pleasant morning-room where his visitors awaited him.

He started back surprised and indignant when, upon opening the door, he beheld Levy and the young girl whom he called his niece. But the Israelite, nowise abashed by his forbidding reception, arose at the young man's entrance, and coming forward to meet him, said:

"Ah, Mr. Aveling, I see you did not expect a visit from us so soon, but business is business, sir, at all times and seasons. I go very soon on a long journey, to be gone I cannot tell how long, and before I went I thought it my duty to come here to—"

"To receive a certain payment, I suppose," interrupted the perturbed host. "I am desirous of cancelling all such obligations. Name the sum I owe you and I will draw my cheque for it at once."

"No, no, you mistake me," replied Levy, shaking his head. "I have my money—that is all settled. I told you that I start very soon upon a long journey, so I come to say something to you before I go."

Edward Aveling knew that an interview of more than ordinary difficulty was before him. He glanced at the girl at the further end of the room, and a slight qualm of pity for her touched him.

"Let us discuss our business in another room," he said, opening the door of the adjoining library and motioning the money-lender to enter.

The man obeyed, and the door was closed behind them, leaving the girl alone sitting passive and motionless. She had come to this place at her uncle's command—she knew not the why or the wherefore, not daring to disobey or to question.

When Levy and the young master of Ashurst were alone together, the former repeated for the third time the announcement of his intended journey.

"I go away for a long time," he said, "so I have brought you your wife."

"My wife!" echoed Aveling, disdainfully. Then recovering himself, he resumed: "Ah, yes, I remember something about an absurd little ceremony which took place the other evening, but that must now be arranged. Of course, it was not legal, considering the circumstances, and now, being in a position to satisfy your claims—"

"No, no," again repeated Levy. "I make no claims. All that has been arranged. I bring you your wife, for the marriage was very legal. And see, here it is in black and white," and he held up to the young man's amazed vision the paper with the same announcement which had so transfixed Upton.

"Whose work is this?" cried Aveling, angrily. "What meddling idiot has done this piece of mischief?"

"I did it," retorted the money-lender, promptly.

"What right had you to do anything of the kind?" demanded the other, his fury rising higher and higher as he realised the perplexing situation in which he found himself.

"I had the best right in the world," answered Levy. "Do you suppose I shall leave my niece unprotected when I go away, or do you suppose I shall not see that her husband acknowledges her?"

"Acknowledge her?" echoed Aveling, passionately. "Never!—never will I claim a low-bred, ignorant Jewess as my wife."

"You cannot help yourself," returned the money-lender, his eyes flashing resentment of Aveling's insulting words. "I knew you would think of disowning and denying your marriage, so I provided for all that. You may scorn and insult us Jews all you please, but it won't help you out of this marriage. The girl is your wife. You can't deny it; and if you do, there are good witnesses to prove it, so a public fight to throw her off will only make matters worse. Ah!" he added, contemptuously, "you Gentiles hold yourselves above the despised Jews, but there was never a Jew who would sneak out of a sacred promise such as you have made."

Edward Aveling sank into a chair, for this interview, this open claim, filled him with consternation. In thinking of his ill-assorted marriage he had supposed that some mercenary influence would induce Levy to keep it secret, but the latter's manner now frustrated all such hope.

Nevertheless, the young man presently recovering himself, said:

"Mr. Levy, I acknowledge that this is a bad predicament both for the girl and for me. You say that the marriage is legal, a fact which at present I am in no fit condition to dispute. You have made it public, thinking, I suppose, that thereby you have taken the surest means of forcing me to abide by it; but I tell you I will never claim this wife which you have thrust upon me. I will give her a suitable maintenance until such time as the courts can annul the hateful contract; but as for presenting her to the world as my wife—as for installing her as mistress of Ashurst—I would rather die than do it!"

"You may please yourself as to that," returned Levy, coldly. "I have brought her here, and here she must stay."

"Indeed?" cried Aveling, hotly. "Do you presume to dictate as to who shall constitute my household?"

"What will you do?" returned the other, with exasperating calmness. "She has no other home than this, for I have given up my little apartment in the city, and shall go from here to the dock to sail for bright Bohemia. Will you turn her out into the street? Will you send for a policeman to take her away? If you do I will say, 'Sir, this young woman is Mr. Edward Aveling's wife. I will prove it to you. Come to the station and send for Rabbi Israel Cohen, for Mr. Thalberg, and for Mrs. Steinberger, and for Joseph Hirschmann. They all witnessed the marriage, and if you would like to see the certificate—'"

"Stop!" cried Aveling, almost beside himself with perplexity. "You drive me frantic with your horrible names and threats! Let me think a moment. Let us come to some amicable settlement. I mean the girl no harm, and will do her no injury if you are reasonably inclined yourself. Take her away and neither you nor she shall have any reason to doubt my generosity. It is for her sake as well as my own that this arrangement should be made, for otherwise her whole life will be ruined."

Levy shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot do anything else than what I have said," he returned, doggedly.

"You had better think twice before you refuse," responded Aveling. "I am not afraid to publicly proclaim the circumstances attending

this marriage. I am not the only imprudent young fellow who has foolishly fallen into the toils of a grasping usurer."

The Israelite compressed his lips angrily. "Neither are you the only young man who has forged his father's name and almost ruined a 'grasping usurer' thereby!" he retorted. "I have that bit of paper put safely away, Mr. Aveling; and let me tell you that if I ever hear that you have put away or ill-treated Rachael Levy in any way soever, I will return, though obstacles mountain high stood in my way, and proclaim the reason why the 'grasping usurer' trapped you as he did. So mind what you do, sir—mind what you do, or you will find that all the money your father left won't keep you out of a prison!"

The man did not wait to note the effect of his words. He did not return to the room where he had left the waiting girl, but striding to a low, French window, threw it open, stepped out upon the lawn beneath, and almost before Edward Aveling was aware of his departure, he had left the grounds and was driving rapidly back to town.

CHAPTER VII.

MARK UPON, gazing sullenly, almost fiercely, out of his window in a remote angle of the house, saw Levy leap from the library casement and hurriedly leave the estate.

Instantly his beaming fancy saw possibilities of fresh mischief, and lightly springing to the ground from his own window, he cautiously approached that suite of apartments where the interview between his cousin and the Israelite described in the last chapter took place.

He went noiselessly, and to all appearances quite casually, as though taking an aimless stroll, yet when he reached that portion of the lawn upon which the windows of the morning room looked, he dropped into a garden chair, for his attentive ear caught the sound of voices within.

It needed but a moment to enable him to distinguish the tones of his cousin speaking with scarcely concealed excitement, but the infrequent rejoinders from another person, falling indistinctly on his ear, he had some difficulty at first in recognising; so without hesitation he resolved to remain where he sat, feeling sure that he should thus be able to gather certain valuable scraps of information.

Could he have looked within that room his own disappointment would have seemed partially avenged, for his cousin's perplexity and suffering were too plainly depicted upon his countenance to leave any doubt of their sincerity.

The young man, stannied by Levy's visit, by his errand, his determination and his sudden departure, remained for a moment after the latter quitted the library nearly speechless with consternation.

What did this new complication portend? What did it not portend? Alas! none better than Edward Aveling knew the dark possibilities which this event might insure.

His first impulse was to order a carriage and send the girl in hot pursuit of the heartless relative who had thus abandoned her, but a second thought showed him the futility of such a movement, for the money-lender held a certain power over him from which he could not escape.

He took one or two hurried turns about the room, and then acknowledging the hopelessness of his position, boldly resolved to make the best of it, however galling it might prove. Therefore he walked towards the morning-room, opened the door and entered the presence of the despised young creature whom he was compelled to receive as his wife.

She sat wearily waiting with a look of passive endurance imprinted upon her face and figure. Her appearance was of the plainest, for the uncouth street garb in which she was arrayed displayed to still greater disadvantage her undeveloped figure and inelegant physique. She looked up timidly as Aveling entered the room,

and arose as though the interview which brought her companion and herself to the place being now terminated, their departure would immediately follow.

A shade of anxiety passed over her face, as looking beyond the young man, she failed to perceive the figure of her uncle.

Aveling closed the door behind him, and coming forward signed to the girl to be seated. She mechanically obeyed.

"You are doubtless aware of the nature of your visit here," he said, in a cold, half-sarcastic tone.

"I came because Mr. Levy commanded me," she said, in a frightened, scarcely audible voice.

"Had you no will in the matter?" he sharply asked.

"None," she answered, still passively. "Why should I have had?"

"Have you always obeyed this Levy as blindly as in this present instance?"

"Always."

Aveling groaned in spirit, as again a disdainful glance shot from his eyes towards the subordinate creature before him. His lip curled as he went on:

"I suppose you have some recollection of what transpired a few nights ago. I scarcely think your uncle has commanded you to forget that scene?"

A slight tinge of colour mounted into the olive-tinted cheek of the girl, but lowering her eyes she made no response.

"I say," he repeated, in a louder key, "I suppose you remember what happened three nights ago?"

She looked up, and in a steadier voice than he had anticipated, said:

"I cannot forget it."

"And doubtless do not choose to do so," he retorted, as moment by moment the girl's characterless, weak nature, her plain and to him most forbidding exterior, became more and more apparent.

Without replying to these last words the girl again lowered her eyes and the slight flush faded from her cheek, leaving it of a sickly pallor which in no way enhanced her appearance in the young man's eyes.

As moment after moment passed in the society of this low-born, ill-bred creature, he resented more and more deeply the hateful bond which allied them; as this resentment increased it became easier and easier for him to palliate his own share in that disastrous affair.

Standing in this girl's presence his own social superiority impressed him as it had never done before, and he would then and there have burst asunder the hateful tie which bound him if Levy's parting threat were not still ringing in his ears. He waited a moment or two to command himself before he again spoke, and then it was with ill-restrained sarcasm.

"May I ask," he said, "what your wishes may be in this most unhappy state of affairs?" Again she looked timidly up, and said:

"My wishes?" I have none. Mr. Levy, my uncle, always decides for me."

"And a pretty decision he has chosen to make," exclaimed Aveling, impatiently. "With the cool presumption of an autocrat he has brought me a wife and left her, whether I will or not, going off without waiting for a reply, and for aught I know, putting the circumference of the earth between us."

"What is that you said, sir?" said the girl, looking up with more animation in face and manner than she had before evinced. "Who has gone away?"

"Who but that crafty uncle, guardian or friend of yours, I do not know which."

The girl arose to her feet.

"Where has he gone?" she wildly asked, taking a step towards the door, as if to follow him. "When did he leave, and how? I did not see him when he went."

The girl's agitation was so evidently sincere that the heart of Aveling smote him with a faint sentiment of pity.

"It is needless for you to think of following

him," he said, in a somewhat kinder tone. "It what he told me is true you would have a difficult task to find him."

The girl looked wildly about her.

"Has has given up our old house," she murmured, as if thinking aloud. "He gave up the keys this morning, after selling everything the rooms contained, and before we came here he drove to the docks and promised to return at eleven; and it is past eleven now!" she added, in a louder voice. "It is past eleven now, the steamer has sailed, and I am left behind! Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

Her distress was so apparent that Aveling could not find it in his heart to add to it by uttering all the bitter thoughts which raged in his bosom.

He looked at her as she ran to the window and gazed out at the winding road by which she and her guardian had come to Ashurst, and by which he had so precipitately and cruelly returned. For a second or two she stood gazing thus, then turned and faced her companion—her husband—with that same, dull, apathetic look which more than all else fixed his dislike and steeled his heart against her.

"You and I must face things as they are," he said, resuming his hard, cold tone and manner. "A confounded, infernal marriage was planned for us, which I for my part was unable to refuse. We may as well be frank with each other now, for after this morning I shall not trouble you with any interviews. I am so situated that I must make the best of a terribly bad matter; therefore I shall assign you certain apartments in this house remote from my own, where you can lead the kind of life which suits you best. You shall never be disturbed by me. I only exact that you shall not fill the house with your people, or exact from me any attentions save such as I am inclined to confer. For my own part, I shall spend the greater portion of my time away from Ashurst. When I am gone you are at liberty to range the house as you choose, always excepting, however, my own suite of rooms, which you are never, upon any pretext, to enter. I shall instruct my servants to treat you with due consideration, but I must bid you be chary of taking any of them into your confidence. These restrictions, I consider reasonable, and I shall expect you to observe them."

The girl, who had turned from the window, listened to these commands with downcast eyes and with hands clasped before her. Alternately flushed and pallid, she betrayed no other sign of emotion, unless the trembling of the downcast eyelids might have been interpreted as such.

Once or twice her lips parted as if she designed speaking, but the nervous tremor which made them quiver and close interdicted the words she might have spoken. Edward Aveling's good resolves were for the moment forgotten in the wild turmoil of selfish feeling which swayed him.

For years his own personal gratification had been the aim of his existence. He had waged a terrible battle with his egotistic tendencies during the three days just passed, but now, for a few moments his self-restraint broke the bounds he had set to it, and with cruel force his harsh words fell upon the unprotected girl who stood so solitary and defenceless before him.

Rancour and hate seems to feed most strangely at times upon non-resistance. Had Rachael Levy burst out in answering condemnation; had she pleaded in self-defence her own childish, almost childish years; had she bitterly reminded him of his own base acts, and upbraided him for having accepted so terrible a sacrifice of innocence; had she, in short, thrown back in the young man's teeth the reproaches which he so selfishly heaped on her, it was likely that he would have come to his better self, and with that moral advocate she would have been accorded better terms that were now vouchsafed her.

Manliness, one of the first elements of a noble character to be assaulted and overborne by dissipation, is also one of the last to rise from

the slough into which a long course of self-indulgence will throw it. So Edward Aveling, young, well-born, handsome, and rich, now took no blame to himself that upon the bowed head of this despised girl he heaped the full measure of his wrath.

He even felt a certain glow of self-adulation that he granted this pariah, as he considered her, a shelter beneath his roof. Did he not prove himself more honourable than many another because he did not give her a well-filled purse and bid her begone and never again cross his threshold?

Instead, he now allowed this woman a home in his luxurious mansion: he would furnish her with comforts such as doubtless she had never before even dreamed of; he would accept this maddening responsibility; he would grimly face the gibes and jeers of the world; he would bide his time when he might shake this incubus off and regain the freedom which he had foolishly thrown away.

So the girl's subdued demeanour, her downcast eyes, her closely clasped hands, had no effect upon the excited young man. Instead, he still went on:

"You will also observe my instructions in another particular. You will not obtrude yourself upon the notice of people as my wife. Here, in Ashurst, it is unavoidable that you should be known as such. I shall, at least, save myself any scandal by making that announcement here; but if chance should throw you among strangers you need not consider it necessary to proclaim your name and condition."

Still the girl listened with that imperturbable silence which had distinguished her from the first. Doubtful if his words had been heeded, he asked:

"Do you hear me?"

The girl raised her eyes from the floor and fixed them upon Aveling's face with a calmness which, for an instant, made his own glance fall. But the next moment his anger was augmented by what he considered her bold indifference.

"Have you heard me?" he repeated, as the girl still made no reply.

"Sir, I have heard you," she said, quietly.

"Then I will go and see that your rooms are made ready for you. You may wait here. A servant will come to conduct you to them."

He left the room as he spoke, and the girl, standing mute and motionless where he left her, followed him with her eyes until the closing door hid him from her sight. Then, with a long, deep breath, a hurried, puzzled glance, she looked around like one just awakening from a dream.

She turned once more towards the window, and looked along the dusty road, which led back to town, stepped closer still to the casement and glanced below, as if calculating the distance to the ground.

Then certain words which her uncle had spoken to her came rushing upon her memory, and that old habit of implicit obedience, of blind, unquestioning duty, came over her like a lethargic spell, and under its influence she sank heavily into the chair from which she had arisen when Aveling so suddenly announced her uncle's departure.

How long she sat thus she did not know. She was aroused by seeing a shadow fall again and again upon the carpet at her feet. She was conscious, too, of footsteps pacing up and down upon the terrace outside the window. She looked up and encountered the steady gaze of Mark Upton.

For one short instant the sight of a familiar face cast a bright look of pleasure over the girl's countenance, for in Mark Upton she recognised one who had often come to her uncle's house, and now, alone in this strange place, and abandoned by the only friend she had ever known, she would have sprung to the side of this man and entreated his friendly aid, but a moment later she shrank back as if she would hide herself from his view.

But her movement revealed to the man the fact that she had observed him, and as if he had been waiting for some such token he came

boldly forward, and springing lightly into the room, made her a low bow, saying, deferentially:

"I am happy in being able to welcome you to Ashurst, Mrs. Aveling. This is really one of the pleasantest moments of my life!"

The girl had risen at Upton's unbidden entrance and now stood before him with that native dignity which the women of her people assume at times so well and so becomingly. He came forward as if he would take her hand, but she held aloof from him, not noticing his friendly offer.

"Will you not extend the right hand of co-sinship?" he asked, with a smile of intended cordiality.

"I am not at liberty to sanction any such relationship," she answered, maintaining her dignified reserve.

"Ah, indeed!" he said, drawing back as if surprised by an unexpected announcement.

"When I witnessed that solemn marriage three nights ago I flattered myself that Ashurst was to be graced by a mistress. Believe me, madame, I sincerely rejoiced that a Mrs. Aveling was at last to preside over this fine establishment."

"Sir," the young girl said, embarrassed alike by Upton's words and manner, "it does not become a person of your years to amuse yourself at the expense of an inexperienced girl like me. I am here at the command of a person whom I have never dared to disobey. He has abandoned me to the care of one who is called my husband. It is not by my own choice that I remain here. I am helpless. My presence is not desired; therefore spare me the added insult of a welcome."

"Madame," cried Upton, again advancing toward her, "you mistake my intentions—you do indeed. I wish to become your friend, and," he added, lowering his voice to a confidential tone, "let me tell you that in this house you will have need for a friend."

The girl fixed her large eyes on Upton's face and still drew back.

"I will not say that I have no need of friends," she replied. "If your offer is well meant, I thank you, but in this house, as elsewhere, I must seek no companionship."

"Your words are wisely chosen, dear cousin," returned Upton, with a graciousness of manner which the inexperienced girl could not fathom. "Companionship will come unsought by you, but it will not, therefore, I hope, be less acceptable."

Still the girl drew away from him, as though conscious that some danger lurked beneath his friendly words.

"It may cheer and comfort you," he went on, "to know that you have one friend, at least, in this cold household. You will pass many lonely days, I fear, in this un congenial place; but if ever you are perplexed, sorrowful or solitary, think of me as of a sincere friend, and command my services and sympathy as you would those of a brother."

The girl bent her head in acknowledgment of these offers, but made no reply. The man's presence made her uneasy, she scarcely knew why. She wished he would quit the room and leave her alone. She distrusted his offers; yet in her inexperience she knew not how to decline or discourage them.

Upton noticed her perplexities as he gazed at her from beneath his pent-house brows, and a smile of satisfaction flitted across his face as he observed how powerless she felt to free herself from his presence.

He was debating with himself as to whether he should prolong the interview when the door opened and a servant appeared. The man glanced from Upton to the young lady, and bowing to both, said:

"Mr. Aveling commanded me to show this young woman to her rooms."

"Young woman!" repeated Upton, with a show of indignation. "Is that a proper way for you to speak of your master's wife? Show Mrs. Aveling to her apartments, Thomas, and see that hereafter both you and all the other servants treat her with every respect. And

here," he added, as the man was turning to leave the room, "if you wish to see your master's marriage announced in black and white, take this paper and read it for yourself."

The man took the paper and again bowed with deference, for Mark Upton was a power in that house, which many a servant had learned to his cost. He led the young girl through a wide corridor to a distant wing of the house, threw open a door leading into a suite of three rooms, and as she passed him in entering, mindful of Upton's injunction, bowed as respectfully as if she had been a grand duchess.

The girl returned the salutation with a sign of dismissal. She waited until the door was closed, then dropping upon her knees beside the nearest chair she buried her face in her hands and gave way to the flood of feeling which had been so long and so painfully repressed.

The icy surface of her nature, that stolid indifference and calmness which long years of repression and loneliness had created, was melted for a moment by bitter experience, and her real self asserting its ascendancy, there swept over the defenceless girl a tide of suffering beneath which she felt helpless and dismayed.

(To be Continued.)

FRENCH CHILDREN INTOXICATED.

I SHALL, I doubt not, startle not a few of my readers, when I state that during a recent visit to France I have frequently seen French children intoxicated. Strange as such an assertion may seem, I deliberately make it and stand by it. Again and again at tables d'hôte I have seen children scarcely more than babies suffering distinctly from alcohol. It is, as travellers in France know, the custom in all districts south of the Loire to supply wine gratis at the two meals, breakfast and dinner, at which the residents in an hotel eat in company.

Repeatedly, then, in the hotels in French watering places, I have watched children of five years old and upwards supplied by their mothers with wine enough visibly to flush and excite them. At Sables d'Olonne one little fellow, whose age could not be more than six, drank at each of two consecutive meals three tumblers of wine slightly diluted with water. The result was on each occasion that he commenced to kiss his mother, proceeded to kiss the person on the other side of him, continued by sprawling over the table, and ended by putting his head in his mother's lap and falling asleep. It never seems to enter into the mind of a Frenchwoman that water may be drunk at a meal.

When long journeys by rail are taken, there is always in the neat basket in which the French mother carries provisions a bottle of wine or wine and water, out of which those of her children who have passed the stage of absolute infancy are allowed to drink. I can indeed say with truth that in the course of a pretty long series of observations of the French, chiefly made, I admit, in public vehicles and hotels, I have rarely if ever seen a glass of cold water, unqualified with any admixture, quaffed by a native. It is now the fashion to mistrust water even when blended with wine, for which purpose the various springs of the Eau St. Galmier are largely employed.

R. H.

WORTH, the Paris dressmaker, has a forewoman called Miss Mary, who is almost as widely known, locally, as himself. She is an English brunette, with a light and very graceful figure, and takes orders with the air of a queen. She is always arrayed in one of Worth's latest inspirations, and an admirer says that if she were clad in a tow bag, with a hempen cord round her waist, she would impart to the garb an air of subtle elegance which would render it attractive.



[OUR FAIR NEIGHBOUR.]

IN THE HIGHLANDS.

It was in the summer of 1861 that Jack Ferrars and myself, then gay bachelors of thirty, weary with the business that had surged in upon us during the winter months, rented between us a small shooting in the Highlands, with a view of recruiting our wasted energies in a pastime of which we were both very fond. I admired Ferrars almost passionately.

He was a fine, handsome fellow, with yellow hair and blonde moustache, and possessed the gentlemanly manners and easy flow of conversation which I esteemed above all things. But my attachment to Jack was no mere passing admiration of his brilliant parts and fascinating manners; it dated as far back as the days when we were boys at school, and had gone on in an uninterrupted flow ever since, strengthened by the test of time.

We had, moreover, numberless things in common, among the most important of which was—we were confirmed bachelors; in good truth, bachelors proud of the name—bachelors who never intended to be anything but bachelors, and who took a peculiar delight in saying so, and in vowing allegiance to one another in a manner that would have done credit to the Corsican brothers.

It was, therefore, with brilliant anticipations of the delight we were to experience in each other's society that we found ourselves the occu-

pants of a pretty villa on the outskirts of a little outlandish place in the Highlands, far removed from all friends and acquaintances. With a sigh of relief, and a delightful feeling of freedom, we wheeled our chairs into the open bow-window on the night of our arrival, and, lighting cigars, sat down to enjoy the really beautiful scene before us.

In the foreground lay our own smoothly cut lawn and rectangular flower beds, with the moonlight falling in pale, bright bars over the sleeping flowers, and beyond, the silver loch, whence we could distinctly hear the laugh of some late pleasure seekers, as they rowed slowly homeward; while above the loch the hills rose in dark, majestic outline against the pale beauty of the sky.

Jack, as apropos to the scene, had been repeating as best he could, between the whiffs of his cigar, Lord Byron's "Lake Leman," and an animated discussion, which had afterward arisen on the merits and demerits of that much maligned poet, was suddenly interrupted by a burst of the finest music I had ever heard. It was a splendid soprano voice, accompanied by the guitar, singing the old pathetic Scotch song, "Auld Robin Gray." The expression thrown into the voice was simply exquisite.

When the mournful minor key was struck, Jack snatched his cigar from his lips, leaned forward in a breathless, listening attitude, as if afraid to lose a single vibration, and did not move again until the song had ceased. I felt strangely affected myself. I had often listened to the same song before, but never with the

soul-thrilling of to-night. As the last cadence died away, borne over the silver waters to the dark hills, it seemed to me as if it was an angel's whisper over the death bed of a child.

The sounds proceeded from the open drawing-room windows of the villa next our own; and when at last they ceased, Jack, resuming his cigar in the most prosaic fashion, remarked:

"By Jove! that was good singing, Bob. This is better than a box at the opera, eh, old fellow?"

"It's the finest singing, without exception, I ever listened to," I answered. "I hope I won't meet the fair possessor of such an exquisite voice."

"What an absurd fellow you are? Why?" asked Jack, blowing a long curl of smoke out of the window.

"Oh, because if she's pretty, I feel as if I should fall in love with her."

Jack winced at his betrayal of weakness.

"Pshaw! Harding, don't talk like an idiot. Ten to one she's an ugly old party, with sunken cheeks, and powder enough on her face to last a lord chief justice's wig six months."

"I almost hope she is," I returned, "for then my heart won't run such a chance of being captured."

"You're a consummate idiot, Harding," was the flattering encomium of my friend Ferrars.

"Sorry you think so, Jack," I said, "but idiot or no idiot, if that's a pretty girl, I would not give sixpence for your own chances of retaining your bachelor notions much longer."

I leaned forward, smiling, to catch a glimpse of his expression in the dim light. A haughty curl was on his lip, and a look of scorn in his blue eyes, which disappeared with a ludicrous rapidity as soon as he observed that I was looking at him.

"Ah, Bob, no fear of that," he said; "you and I are too jolly together to care about pretty girls, however fascinating, else we'd have been married long ago."

"I begin to think so, Jack," I returned, "and upon my word, I often wonder how a fellow like you, upon whom scores of designing mammas have had their envious eyes, was never caught."

"I was going to make the same remark about you," said Jack, with a laugh, as he stroked his handsome moustache.

"It seems to me we're a couple of extremely clever fellows," I answered, rising.

"We're a couple of extremely lucky fellows, at any rate, to have safely escaped the snares and fascinations laid for us," returned Ferrars, shrugging his broad shoulders and looking the personification of happy bachelorhood as he thus disburdened himself of his anti-matrimonial notions. "But what say you to a bit of supper, old boy? It is getting late."

I agreed, and we both descended to the dining-room. Mrs. Mason, the worthy housekeeper, had lighted a fire in honour of our arrival, and the dying embers now cast a dark red glow on the walls, making a decidedly comfortable appearance, notwithstanding it was a fine autumn night. When we turned up the gas a cosy little supper, laid out for two, was displayed, and the wine and fruit we had been using at dinner still stood on the side-board.

Never were there two happier, jolly, or more amiable bachelors than Ferrars and I that night as we sat chatting over our walnuts and claret, and laying out our schemes of enjoyment until the small hours warned us that it was high time we were in the primary enjoyment of sleep.

"Good-night, Jack," I said, as at last we separated for our respective rooms.

"Good-morning rather," echoed Jack, as he shut the door, "and I hope the ghost of Robin Gray won't disturb your slumber."

A sharp rat-tat on my bedroom door, and the familiar "Hallo, old boy!" of Jack outside awoke me from one of the most delightful and refreshing sleeps I had enjoyed for a long time. To say the least of it, I felt fierce to be thus awakened.

"Confound you, Ferrars," I shouted; "what do you want? Be off."

"Get up, old boy, get up; if you're not out of bed before I count ten, you shall have no breakfast. One—two—three."

The threat was too awful to be anticipated, and before he had contemplated the given number I had unlocked the door for him. He came in with a merry look in his blue eyes, and throwing himself down on the bed I had so unwillingly vacated, began kicking the white counterpane with his dirty boots.

"Jack, man, look what you're doing," I said, pointing to a mud splash on the clean linen. "Mrs. Mason will think I tumbled into bed last night in the disreputable condition of not knowing very well what I was about."

"Just tell her I did it, Bob, and she'll be delighted to put on a fresh counterpane, I am sure. But do you know what I was doing this morning while you were driving your pigs to market?"

"Feeding the chickens, probably," I answered, feeling cross at Jack's good humour.

"Guess again," said he, laughing.

"No. If you don't choose to tell me, my curiosity will wait," I returned, as I arranged my necktie.

"Well, then, I've been getting on good terms with Mrs. Mason, and finding out who our friends of musical repute next door are."

"The deuce you have," I ejaculated, pausing in the adjustment of my shirt studs. Jack nodded, his blue eyes fairly dancing with merriment. "And the result of the inquiry is—"

"That the household consists of a Colonel Harris, his wife and daughter."

"Is that all you know about them?" I asked, somewhat disappointed at the meagreness of the details, as I put the finishing touches to my toilet.

"You ungrateful scoundrel!" returned Jack. "Why, the people only arrived here two days ago, and Mrs. Mason herself only got the information this morning from the baker's boy at the door."

"Ah! then it is sure to be correct. But come, let's go downstairs and try if we can get a look at Colonel Harris or his pretty daughter."

It was a glorious morning. The sunshine was dancing gleefully on the rippling surface of the loch, and the flowers were lifting their dewy heads and filling the room with their fresh fragrance. A very tempting repast stood awaiting us on the table, and Jack's blue eyes looked not amiss behind the coffee urn.

"Although this is very pleasant, Jack," I remarked, as I took the cup he handed to me, "you look almost good enough to kiss, my dear."

"Come, no chaff. Is your coffee sweet enough?" he returned, affectionately twirling the ends of his blonde moustache.

"Oh, it's all right," I said, alluding to the handsome appendage; "I didn't make any mistake about that."

He turned his laughing eyes on me for an instant, and no sooner had they wandered to the window than he started up, uttering a long—wheh! I stood up too, following his eyes inquiringly, and there, over the low hedge that divided the gardens, I caught sight of a young girl in a fresh morning dress, engaged in cutting flowers, and daintily arranging them into a bouquet. What we saw of her face under the broad-rimmed hat that shaded it was bright and beautiful.

"Good heavens, Miss Harris!" said Jack.

"By Jove, Miss Harris!" echoed I. And we both looked into each other's faces and laughed outright.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Jack, with the utmost inconsistency, as he sat down and resumed his breakfast.

"Just what you're laughing at?" I returned, breaking my egg.

"She's not old or ugly, either," he remarked, after a pause.

"By Jove, she isn't!" I answered.

"Are you very sorry?"

"No. Are you glad?"

"It doesn't matter a rap to me whether she is or not."

"You are a cynical old bachelor, Ferrars."

"Allow me to return the compliment, Harding."

"I meant you to keep it."

"I decline it with thanks, as not suitable. I'm not cynical."

"When I want to expatiate on the charms of a nice young lady you get as sour as vinegar; now you know it's true, so not a word in reply, but hurry up, old boy—tempus fugit."

We were both in a hurry to be off to our sport, and soon all thoughts of Miss Harris were forgotten in the bustle of arranging our shooting gear. The waggonette was brought round to the door, and two very happy, heart-whole bachelors sprang lightly into it, and were bowled away down the gravel path, through the gate, and out of sight.

We had had a pretty good day's sport on the moors, and returned home in the best of humour with ourselves, and tired enough to enjoy thoroughly an after-dinner lounge in our drawing-room, which we had converted pro tem. into a smoking-room, and ornamented in every available place with meerschauts, tobacco and cigar-boxes.

Upon this evening, Jack, who was a fair player on the pianoforte, was performing the "Blue Bells of Scotland," with much elaborate flourishing and crossing of hands, and I, as the audience, was stretched on three chairs at the window, lazily smoking my cigar, in that sort of half-dreamy, comatose state that one feels in the enjoyment of well-earned leisure and rest. I cannot say that I was altogether in rapture over the "Blue Bells," but perhaps they helped to promote the pleasant tenor of my thoughts as I lay with my eyes half closed, letting the smoke from my weed curl affectionately in the folds of Mrs. Mason's lace curtains.

"How jolly Ferrars and I are together," I chuckled to myself; "this little trip of ours is going to be altogether a success. Girls are well enough to meet occasionally, but they become a bore. Now, suppose I had a wife here with me instead of Jack, she would not be content unless she had a house filled with visitors and servants, and—"

Just at this interesting juncture of my ruminations, the flourishing and dashing at the piano stopped, and presently the chairs on which my legs were resting were pulled from under me, and I was left unceremoniously sprawling on the carpet, with Jack's face grinning down on me in evident enjoyment of my discomfiture. But my fall did not cause me to forget the thread of my meditations, and as I gathered up my elegant limbs, I remarked:

"My wife would not have done that, Jack."

"No; she would have kissed the poor, tired darling, and thrown a shawl gently over him, to keep him from catching cold," said Jack, in a tone of mock affection.

"Picture of domestic happiness!" I returned, laughing, as I readjusted the chairs. "Hark! What is that?"

The stillness of the night outside was broken by the same exquisite music we had listened to on the previous evening. In an instant our banter was hushed. It was a gay, lively air, which I recognised as a selection from the "Student's Frolic," and the singer seemed even more at home in this style than in the pathetic. It made me feel as joyous as a bird in spring, and had I not been too lazy, I could have danced in the very exuberance of my spirits.

"Jack, we must get an introduction to that little girl," I cried, enthusiastically, throwing my half-finished cigar out of the window.

But, to my surprise, Jack seemed in no mood to talk, and kept staring out of the window, taking no notice of my remark. Feeling aggrieved at not being met with the opposition and contempt I expected for proposing such a thing, I went over and slightly shook him, at which he ran his fingers through his long curls, and looking up with an expression of innocent surprise, asked:

"What is it?"

"Wouldn't you like an introduction to Miss Harris?" I repeated.

"Why, yes; of course, Harding; you needn't have shaken a fellow half out of his senses to ask that silly question," and Jack readjusted his broad shoulders and relapsed into silence again.

I tried to talk of Miss Harris, music, literature, politics, but all to no purpose. He sat staring out of the window, as if the seven wonders of the world were visible on our path of moonlit lawn. Rather disgusted, I left him staring and retired to bed; but as I went upstairs I must own to a little curiosity as to the cause that made my amiable and talkative friend suddenly so laconic and disagreeable.

The warm August days ripened into mellow September. Since the night of Jack's revelry, a change had certainly come over him, but as yet he left me uninformed as to the cause. Sometimes his old gaiety would return, but it was sure to be followed by a fit of more sombre silence than before. I chaffed him about it often, but his testy replies invariably shut me up. We never met Miss Harris, and the only time we saw her was in the morning among her flowers, or the evening, when, after having ravished us with her music, she stepped out on the balcony, leaning on her father's arm to enjoy the moonlight.

On such occasions Jack seemed strangely affected, and would either break forth into voluminous praises of her grace and beauty, or sit gazing merely at the apparition. Such a state of affairs led me naturally enough to the conclusion that whatever might be the matter with Ferrars, the fair cantatrice had something to do with it.

One afternoon we resolved to have a row down the loch, and as I crossed the lawn, with an oar over each shoulder, I chanced to glance at Colonel Harris' window, where the two ladies were seated sewing. The younger one was scanning me with a half-amused expression in her brown eyes; and as Jack came sauntering down the gravel path, with a hand in each pocket, I quietly said:

"Miss Harris is at the window."

He looked in the direction I indicated, and, to my surprise, he immediately blushed up like a girl.

"Why, Jack, old fellow, what is the matter?" I asked, with a smile I could not repress.

Miss Harris was viewing us with the aid of an opera-glass.

"Pshaw! Harding, get on board quick and row as well as you can," he answered, throwing himself in the stern of the boat, in a position where the sunshine struck forcibly on his handsome face and auburn locks.

I bent as gracefully as I could to my oars—I had been a fair oarsman at Cambridge—and soon the little craft was skimming far over the sunlit ripples.

As it was still early when we returned, we strolled down the road until it would be time to go in for dinner, when, turning a corner, we came suddenly upon Miss Harris and her father mounted upon a couple of splendid greys.

As she cantered past us with a smile, her beautiful face flushed with the exercise, I certainly thought I had never seen anyone half so lovely. Her perfect form; the grace of every fold of her dark green riding-habit; the indescribable coils and twists of her brown hair, with the sunshine shadowing it to gold; the coquettish little felt hat turned up on one side, with its dancing plume and streaming gossamer—combined to make up a charming tout ensemble, which was altogether irresistible. Jack stared hard after her in open-mouthed admiration for such an indecent length of time I was constrained to accuse him.

"Ferrars, you admire Miss Harris," I said.

He had his head bent, and was kicking the dead leaves with his feet as he walked. When he raised his blue eyes they were filled with the expression of a passion I had never noticed in them before, and which fully corroborated the four words he uttered as his eyes met mine:

"I do love her!"

Strange as it may seem I was thunderstruck

at the announcement. Much as I had noted the change in Ferrars, I had hesitated to ascribe it to the circumstance of his being in love. I protested and raged against such folly—falling in love with a lady with whom he had never exchanged a single word.

For answer, a passionate confession was poured into my astonished ears, in which he vowed he must and would win her. Matters were made considerably worse when we received our letters that evening informing us of business engagements requiring our immediate return to town. It would be impossible for us to remain more than three days longer.

"Humph! your time is rather limited, Ferrars," I said, with more sarcasm than sympathy. "You'll be a pretty sharp fellow if you woo and win a handsome girl in three days."

The next morning he came down to breakfast looking pale and haggard. I don't believe he had slept all night, but I made no inquiries, as I felt annoyed at this alarming impulse of my old friend, and was altogether out of temper with this adventure of his. He ate little or no breakfast, and looked so dejected that at last my sympathies were aroused, and I shouted cheerfully:

"Cheer up, old fellow; we'll manage it all beautifully, and you'll go up to London the accepted suitor of Miss Harris."

Gradually he became more animated, and began to talk, and finally quite shocked me by declaring that he was going to write and propose to Miss Harris that very day. I considered him to be simply mad, but he had apparently thought it well over, and was determined what course to adopt.

"But, Jack, the thing is preposterous," I argued; "she knows nothing about you. Can you expect anything but a distinct refusal?"

"And what course would you recommend?" he asked, curling his upper lip as he waited for my advice.

"Why get introduced to her first, and wait at least until you know her a little before you make such a proposal," I said.

"Have I not been waiting for the last two months?" he answered. "And do you forget that in two days I must leave this place? There is no time for waiting now; it must be action, immediate and peremptory!"

"And are you quite determined to do—this—this thing?"

"Quite."

"And will nothing persuade you that it is an extremely foolish action, and one which will be certain to defeat all your wishes?"

"Under the circumstances, I consider it the only thing to be done."

I succumbed. In difficulties of a different nature he had generally proved a better diplomatist than I, and perchance his skill might extend to this department also.

"Well, if it must be action, as you say it must, action let it be; you must write your proposal," I said, pulling out the writing material with alacrity and placing a chair for Jack at the desk; and after a full hour's scribbling and scratching out, a clean copy was penned, which ran as follows:

"DAIL D'ABROCH LODGE, Sept. 28, 1881.

"DEAR MISS HARRIS,

"I regret that circumstances have prevented me making your acquaintance ere I address to you words which, I pray, you will not think lightly of from the mere fact that I have never spoken to you. Since I came here, two months ago, you have excited my intense admiration, which feeling has lately ripened into a deep and passionate love. My business engagements now demand my immediate return to London, but I feel that I cannot go without first learning from you my fate. I make now an honourable offer of my hand in marriage, and beseech you not to think lightly of it, as on your decision must depend my life's happiness or misery. If possible an answer per to-day's post will very much oblige,

"Yours respectfully,

"JOHN FERRARS."

"That will do," I said, holding the sheet, covered with Jack's neat handwriting, at arm's length. "Concise; to the point; not too spoony; slightly formal; but under the circumstances it is better so."

Jack folded and addressed the letter; and with serious misgivings at my heart, which I dared not express, I walked with him to the post-office, and saw him drop the missive into the box. We did nothing all day but lounge about the house and garden, waiting anxiously until the postman would bring the letters in the evening.

At length the weary day passed, and the postman arrived; and sure enough there it was, a little pink note, addressed to John Ferrars, Esq. My heart beat as quickly as if it were my own happiness that was at stake as Jack broke the seal. I looked over his shoulder, and what we both saw was:

"DEAR MR. FERRARS,—

"I accept the great honour you have done me. Before, however, meeting you I would like you to see papa, and obtain his consent to our engagement.

"Yours, sincerely,

"EUNICE HARRIS."

There is an old adage that says, "Truth is stranger than fiction," and if ever I felt the force of it it was when I read that note. Contrary to all my expectations, Jack had actually been accepted. He bore his good fortune with much more equanimity than I did, his only remark being:

"Eunice—what a pretty name."

While I, with strangely mixed feelings, actually got up a hurrah. The next difficulty was how or where to meet Colonel Harris and obtain his consent. An idea seized me. I had seen the old colonel walk down the road a short time before.

"Stay you here," I said to Jack, and putting on my hat, off I went.

I had not gone far when I espied the colonel leaning on a wire fence, watching some workmen digging a drain. Pretending to be interested in the same pursuit, I walked up and made some remark regarding the work.

Thereafter we got on the most friendly terms, which ended, as I intended it should, by his walking home with me, and coming into the house to join in a rubber of whist. I conducted him into the dining-room, and then went for Jack.

He began to get slightly nervous when he heard what I had done, but I told him not to say anything to the colonel about his daughter to-night, only to make himself as agreeable as he could. I then instructed Mrs. Mason to set down the very best she had in the house for supper, and went to entertain our interesting guest.

We found him a charming old gentleman. At whist he and dummy beat Jack and me; and, possessing an inexhaustible fund of humorous stories, the time passed so pleasantly that it was twelve o'clock before he rose to go.

A cordial invitation to visit him was extended to us as we bade him good-night in the hall, which was exactly what I wanted and meant we should have. Pulling a grave face, I said:

"Nothing would have given us greater pleasure, had we been staying longer, but we are to leave for London the day after to-morrow."

"Then you are to spend to-morrow evening with me," was his hearty rejoinder. "I will take no refusal."

And to the arrangement we agreed.

"A thousand thanks to you, Bob; you're a capital fellow," said Jack, gratefully grasping my hand as we separated for the night.

"Ferrars."

"Hallo!"

"Are you ready?"

I was donning my dress suit preparatory to presenting myself in Colonel Harris's drawing-room.

"Yes."

"Come here, then."

He came in, dressed for conquest evidently, and looking faultlessly handsome. I surveyed him critically. There was not an item amiss, from the negligé arrangement of his auburn curls to the polish of his patent leathers.

"How do I look?" he asked, with a gay laugh and a satisfactory glance at his magnificent proportions in the mirror.

"Like a Polish prince," I answered. "Miss Harris may have many lovers, but I'll bet a new hat she never had a better looking fellow than you. Now look here, you'll do exactly as I tell you, and not diverge one iota from the rule I lay down. Ask for Colonel Harris, and say you wish to see him alone. When the first greetings are over you explain to him that Mr. Harding is detained for a short time with a little packing he had to finish, and that you did not wait for him, as you had something to communicate to him (the colonel). Then pitch into the subject nearest your heart; tell him of your business and social connections, and don't neglect to impress him with the fact that you are your mother's only son, and heir to her fortune and estates. These sort of things go a long way with the old boys."

Having thus delivered my advice to Jack, I sent him off to push his sentimental fortunes with Colonel Harris, and sat down pensively to smoke a cigar before following him. About half an hour afterwards I sallied forth, and a minute or two found me ringing at the colonel's front door. My heart beat audibly as, following the servant upstairs, I heard the sound of a piano, and Miss Harris's voice merrily humming a bar or two of some lively air, and felt much relieved when the door was thrown open and I found myself ushered into the presence of only Colonel Harris and Jack. One glance at Jack's flushed face as he stood leaning against the marble mantel, sufficed to assure me that all had gone "merry as a marriage-bell" with him, and with a feeling of thankfulness I returned the colonel's cordial greeting.

"Come away, now, and see the ladies; I know this boy is getting impatient," he said, with a twinkle in his eye, as he laid his hand familiarly on Ferrars's shoulder.

"It's all right, old boy, and I am the happiest fellow alive!" whispered Jack, as we followed the colonel downstairs. But I had only time to grasp his hand and give it a squeeze of congratulation, when the drawing-room door was opened, and we entered.

The elder lady was seated on a couch beside the fireplace, where a fire had been lighted, for the evenings were getting chill; the younger was leaning on the piano, engaged in looking over some music. Both stood erect as we entered. The colonel, going over to the elder lady, took her hand and led her forward, saying, as he did so:

"Eunice, I have much pleasure in introducing Mr. Ferrars to you. Mr. Ferrars, my daughter."

Ferrars turned deadly pale.

"And—the other—lady?" he gasped, looking around at the beautiful young girl standing at the piano.

"My wife!"

I don't suppose our consternation could have been greater had a bomb-shell entered the apartment. Jack would have fallen had I not supported him. Everyone seemed to take in the situation at a glance. Miss Harris did not scream or faint, or do anything which a younger or more sentimental lady in similar circumstances might have done, but she blushed as deeply as her faded complexion would allow of, and, covering her face with her hands, said:

"Oh, how dreadful! He has thought Nelly was my father's daughter."

Mrs. Harris glided to her side and led her from the room, while the colonel and I applied restoratives to poor Jack's colourless lips.

"Poor fellow," muttered the colonel; "I see his unlucky mistake. I wish for the sake of all concerned this had not happened."

"This explains the ready acceptance of Ferrars's proposal, and the colonel's willing agreement to let his daughter marry a comparative stranger," I inwardly growled in disdain.

of the whole business, as I loosened the tie which Jack had so carefully arranged an hour before.

When he had somewhat recovered, we took him home, and laid him on the sofa in the dining-room. I sat by him all the evening, and although he did not seem in the least excited or feverish, he kept asking me such strange questions, and seemed so unconscious of all that had transpired, that I was afraid his brain was affected.

I, however, was determined that we should not on any consideration remain a day longer in Dail d'Arroch; and summoning Mrs. Mason, I instructed her to get our traps ready, as we required to be off by the first steamer in the morning.

"Mr. Ferrars does not feel well," I added, in reply to a glance of inquiry she cast at Jack as he lay motionless on the sofa. "He has had unpleasant news from home."

My conscience smote me for the deliberate falsehood I uttered, but I felt some excuse was necessary for the prostrate condition of Ferrars. But Mrs. Mason was so profuse in her expressions of sympathy that somehow or other I could not help conjecturing that she guessed somewhat of the truth.

At seven o'clock the next morning a close carriage was drawn up to the door, and Jack and I were driven for the last time down the trim avenue, and arrived at the station in good time to catch the train. Ferrars' manner was unnatural and excited, and I felt as if I dared not leave him for an instant. What need to relate our miserable journey south; enough to say that when we reached London Ferrars was in the delirium of fever.

The attack proved a virulent one, and for six weeks he lay partly unconscious, even after the delirium had left him. When at last he began to recover, I took a run down to the Isle of Wight with him, leaving him in charge of his mother, who was staying there. In the course of six weeks he came back, looking almost as well as ever.

He showed me a letter he had received from Colonel Harris, in which that worthy gentleman expressed his deepest sympathy. The letter went on to say that the writer had adjusted matters at home as delicately as he could, and that, had he for a moment supposed that Mr. Ferrars had mistaken his wife for his daughter, his friend should have been spared the unfortunate denouement in the drawing-room.

The occurrence which so nearly cost him his life was never referred to again by us. And up to this date, at least, he seems quite contented with his bachelor chambers and the society of his old friend, Bob Harding.

H. H.

FACETIE.

PIECE WORK VERSUS TIME WORK.

PARTY on Roof, who is impatient, to British workman, who has hailed tram-car, but does not hasten to overtake it: "Now then, mate, do a bit of piecework for once."

(Muttered execrations from British workman.)

—Judy.

'T WAS EVER THUS!

PATRICK (dressing for a party): "Bedad now, and I shan't be able to git on these boots till I've worn thim a toime or two."

—Judy.

A SENSATION SCENE.

COOK: "If you please, mum, which Ann an' me 'av' 'ad a haccident and broke two teacups?"

RISING CHINA MANIAC (only just beginning to get up a collection): "Two teacups! What teacups?"

COOK: "Oh, not them as master gave ten shillings a set for. Only them two smoked ones as was on the parlour mantel-piece."

—Judy.

FRUSTRATED SOCIAL AMBITION.

MRS. LYON HUNTER (to Herr Bogoluboffski, the famous Virtuoso, whose afternoon pianoforte

recitals are the wonder of the world): "A—by-the-bye, Herr Bogoluboffski, we thought you might, perhaps like to try the new Broadwood?"

CHORUS OF LADIES: "Oh do, Herr Bogoluboffski! Pray do!"

HERE BOGOLUBOFFSKI (who has been asked to dine en famille, and spend the evening "quite in a friendly way."): "Ladies! If you would perhaps vish zat I should amuse ze gompany, kvite in a vrently vay, I gan preak ze boket on my arm, I gan schvallow ze duple-schbons, and I gan schdiek a lighted dallow-gantle in my mouse vious pudding it out—pot I cannot blay ze biano after tinner!"

(N.B.—On the strength of Herr Bogoluboffski's coming, Mrs. L. H. has cunningly invited just one or two very select friends to drop in during the evening, and the new Broadwood Grand has been procured at great expense for the occasion.)

—Punch.

BANG!

CUSTOMER: "Ape'ny cracker, please."

CAUTIOUS TRADESMAN: "Are you under thirteen?"

CUSTOMER (indignant): "Under thirteen? Why, bless the man, I used to deal wi' yer father!"

—Judy.

SLIGHTLY HIBERNIAN.

IRISH CONDUCTOR: "Now, sorr, ef you wish to smoke here, ye must put out yer pipe or go on the top!"

—Funny Folks.

MY ROSEBUD.

THE maiden I courted was fair as a rose,

With eyes that eclipsed all the bright stars that shine.

I loved her, indeed, from the tip of her nose

To her dear little foot, which to me was divine.

And ofttimes I promised myself when our wooing

Was over and time would have softened our joy.

Our old adage should be made up of billing and cooing

In those days we were only a girl and a boy.

But, sad to relate, the rose has long faded

From the cheek that to me was a sweet bed of posies,

And the eyes, once so bright, look greyish and jaded—

Their blueness has settled in that sweetest of roses.

And I linger alone in my dreary old dwelling,

"True love never did run smooth," it is said.

I myself have turned grey, and it's useless now telling

You my rosebud is spoken of as that old maid.

O. P.

GEMS.

THE thirsty man dreams of fountains and running streams; the hungry man of ideal banquets; and the poor man of heaps of hidden gold. Nothing certainly is more manifested than the imagination of a beggar. It is thus kind nature consoles with shadows for the lack of substance.

We are apt to believe in Providence so long as we have our way; but if things go awry, then we think, if there is a God, he is in heaven, and not on earth. The cricket in the Spring builds his house in the meadow, and chirps for joy, because all is going so well.

The first years of man must make provision for the last. He that never thinks, can never be wise. Perpetual levity must end in ignorance; and intemperance, though it may fire the enchantments of fancy, shall cease and phantom

delights dance no more about us, we shall have no more comforts but the esteem of wise men and the means of doing good.

He that goes too near sin to day may fall into it to-morrow. Prudence will not always venture to the brink of innocence.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

A GOOD SAUCE.—Vinegar, two pints; port wine, half a pint; cayenne, half an ounce; walnut catsup, one gill; mushroom catsup, one gill; essence of anchovies, two ounces; powdered cochineal, half an ounce; and six cloves of garlic. You will find this an improvement on the sauce you mention. We can give you Superlative, Epicurean, Quin, Cassarep, and Soy sauces, any one at a time, as you desire.

PASTE FOR COLD MINCEMEAT PIES.—Throw your butter into a pail of cold spring water for a night before using it. Use it in the proportion of half a pound of butter to a pound of flour. First, mix half the butter with the flour, and mix the paste with cold water till of about the consistence of butter; then roll it into a thin sheet about an inch thick, and put the remainder of your butter over it in thin slices; then roll up the paste as you would do a jam roll, and lay it in a cool place, or cover it in a dish with a plate containing pounded ice, for half an hour. Take it on your pastry-board, and roll it out to the desired thickness. This paste is suitable for Melton or other pies, and will not fall to pieces. Bake in a moderate oven.

FRENCH ROLLS.—One pint of milk, one small cup of home-made yeast (you can try the baker's), flour enough to make a stiff batter; raise over night; in the morning add one egg, one tablespoonful of butter, and flour enough to make it stiff to roll. Mix it well, and let it rise, then knead it again (to make it fine and white), roll out, cut with a round tin and fold over, put them in a pan, and cover very close. Set them in a warm place until they are very light; bake quickly, and you will have delicious rolls.

MISCELLANEOUS.

HORSESHOES of silver, studded with diamond nails, are among the shoe buckles of the season in Paris.

MR. EDISON, the American inventor, is expected in England next month.

AT last the Admiralty have decided not to allow foreigners to visit the naval dockyards without letters of authority from the Lords Commissioners.

IT is stated that the Post-office authorities are thinking of trying the experiment of sixpenny telegrams within a six mile radius of St. Martin's-le-Grand.

DRUSCIVICH, who, with the other detectives, has been released from custody, has been appointed as a private detective to a well-known London firm, with a salary of £250 a year.

THE bracelet slipper has just been introduced. The shoe is cut very low in front and high upon the instep, it is fastened with a finely chiselled real gold bracelet instead of the usual strap. Another expensive novelty in the same line is the Andalusian boot, made of black satin, with lace ruffles down the front seam, and fastened with real jewel buttons.

SO far as the computation can yet be made, the present winter will witness unusual tightness in a very popular article of food. It is estimated that there is at present a deficit of twenty millions of pounds in the quantity of tea which ought to be in the London warehouses.

THE pitch at the Royal Italian Opera is to be lowered next season to the diapason normal. This alteration, which will involve an outlay of more than £1000 for new wind instruments, has been decided upon mainly at the instance of Madame Adelina Patti.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.—With the view of making our annual Christmas Number complete, we have reserved space for a few original charades, riddles, puzzles, &c., to which we invite some of our ingenious readers to contribute.

CHARLIE.—We cannot claim any special right to speak on the subject of dreams. Our interests and sympathies are occupied much more with the mental conditions described as "wide-awake." Several eminent and learned men have discussed the subject, and with some diversity of view the agreement is general that the mind is never quite dormant.

L. C.—There are forty-three thousand five hundred and sixty square feet in an acre.

T. H. H.—The 3rd of January, 1832, fell on a Saturday. A CONSTANT READER.—Gold has been hammered to a thickness equal to the 1-100 part of ordinary printing paper.

ALFRED.—The seven wonders of the world are: The Pyramids, the Mausoleum of Artemisia, Diana's Temple at Ephesus, Babylon's Hanging Gardens, the Colossus at Rhodes, the Jupiter of Phidias, and the Pharos of Alexandria.

R. G. W. M.—Under some circumstances it would be perfectly proper. Suppose the young lady has gone in broad daylight, or in pleasant weather, and darkness has come on, or a shower has overtaken her, no gallant acquaintance would hesitate about offering to see her safely home.

LEONARD.—The best way for you to get practical information on the subject would be to hunt up some establishment conducted on the co-operative plan, and watch its workings for yourself. You could also talk over the matter with the managers of the establishment, and thus get some practical knowledge of the business details involved in it.

SARA JANE.—1. The 18th of April, 1818, fell on a Saturday; the 24th of May, 1824, on a Monday. 2. Hair, golden.

WILLIAM S.—If the person mentioned dies intestate, leaving a mother, but no wife, child, father, brother, sister, nephew, or niece, the whole of the personal property goes to the mother; if a wife only is left, and no blood relations, the property goes half to the wife and half to the Crown.

JAMES.—In George the Fourth's reign Parliament commenced on April 23, 1820, and lasted till June 2, 1820, a period of six years, one month, and nine days.

CALCULATOR.—1. Elevenpence-threepennings per day would be exactly eighteen pounds per year. 2. Sorry we cannot oblige you.

ROSS.—Your uncle cannot be heir-at-law to your father while you are alive. We cannot give you further advice without having the exact words of your grandmother's will before us.

T. W. A.—In the absence of knowledge of many items which you do not mention we could not give you any directions. Much depends on the extent to which you have raised expectations, or committed yourself, or been "practically engaged." The truth is, we have no great "heart" in the business of thinking out and describing to a man the way in which he may "rid himself" of a poor girl, to whom he has long been paying attentions, in order that he may comfortably marry a rich girl. Men who are engaged in undertakings of that nature cannot count on the help or sympathy of the Editor.

AMANDA.—Book agents or their principals cannot compel anyone to fulfil more than the terms of the contract. If a work is to be completed, according to the prospectus, in, say, twenty-five numbers, you cannot be compelled to pay for thirty-five. But the extension is sometimes honestly found necessary, and in some instances the publishers get names on a promise with a saving clause, "it is expected," or something of that sort. There is need for exact understanding at the beginning to prevent misunderstandings at the end.

EMILY, twenty-one, dark, tall, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy.

DOMESTIC, nineteen, dark, good-tempered, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-three, good-looking.

GALLEY and FIREBRAN, two seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with two young ladies. Galley is twenty-one, dark hair, medium height, of a loving disposition. Firebram is twenty-six, dark hair, fond of children, medium height.

BUTTON STICK, twenty-two, in the R.M., brown hair, blue eyes, loving, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

IDA, MARIA, EMILY, and ELIZABETH, four friends, would like to correspond with four young men with a view to matrimony. Respondents must be between twenty-two and thirty.

PRIMOISE and COWSLIP, two sisters, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Primoise is nineteen, fair, of a loving disposition. Cowslip is seventeen, dark, fond of home and music. Respondent must be between eighteen and twenty-one.

ANNIE, seventeen, fair, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a gentleman about nineteen, good-looking, and reside in London.

JIM, HARRY, and BILL, three petty officers in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies about twenty-two. Jim is tall, dark hair and eyes. Harry is fair, blue eyes, medium height. Bill is dark, good-looking, medium height.

LADY MILDRED.

LADY MILDRED, idly dreaming,
Leans across her window-sill;
It is night-time, and pale Luna
Slowly climbs the western hill.
Lamps are twinkling in the village,
And along the dark 'dying lane
Sometimes floats a cheerful whistle,
Bearing out some well-known strain.

And the eyes of Lady Mildred
Glisten like an evening star,
As they rest upon a cottage
Gleaming 'mong the trees afar.
There's a burst of merry laughter,
There's a sound of happy talk,
And the narrow door flies open
As a step sounds on the walk.

'Tis a sweet and holy picture,
One which ne'er can painted be;
There is steam upon the fender,
There's a table set for tea,
And within a wicker cradle
Sleeps a babe with forehead white;
Lady Mildred draws her curtains,
Shutting all the scene from sight.

Then she hears a fond, young couple,
Careless of earth's noisy din,
Shut within the night and darkness,
Close their happy home-life in;
And she walks her frescoed chamber,
And she thinks, were only she
Half as happy as her neighbour
What a blessing it would be.

And she shuts her eyes and ponders
On the sight which she has seen
In the little cosy cottage
Over which the willows lean.
Then she seeks her feathered pillow,
There to wet with tear the lace,
While across the lane a mother
Cradles warm a baby's face.

M. O.

LILLIE and AMELIA, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. Lillie is twenty-two, golden hair, blue eyes, fond of home, and good-tempered. Amelia is eighteen, brown hair, hazel eyes, thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be twenty and twenty-five, tall, dark.

MAY and LILLIAN, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. May is twenty, tall, dark, good-looking. Lillian is twenty-one, medium height, dark, fond of home.

LEONIE and INEZ, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Leonie is eighteen, fair, fond of home and music. Inez is twenty, dark, fond of music and dancing.

YOUNG JACK and STEPHENS ARMATURE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with two young ladies. Young Jack is twenty-two, fair, medium height, fond of music. Stephens Armature is twenty-two, dark, fond of music and children.

VIOLET and MINNIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. Violet is twenty, fair, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Minnie is sixteen, medium height, light brown hair, blue eyes, good-tempered.

POLLIE and SARAH, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Pollie is nineteen, light hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children. Sarah is nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes, good-tempered, domesticated. Respondents must be twenty-one, good-looking.

CLARENCE M., eighteen, brown hair, blue eyes, medium height, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two with a view to matrimony.

EDMUND, eighteen, tall, would like to correspond with a young lady. Respondents must be thoroughly domesticated, fond of home, loving.

VIOLET and DAISY, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Violet is eighteen, tall, dark, fond of home and music. Daisy is eighteen, fair, medium height, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be about twenty-one, tall, dark.

FLYING SCUD and NORTHERN EAGLE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Flying Scud is twenty-one, fair, good-looking. Northern Eagle is twenty-three, dark, tall, of a loving disposition.

BEATRICE, CHRISTINA, JASMINA, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men (tradesmen preferred). Beatrice is tall, fair, fond of home. Christina is dark, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing. Jasmina is tall, dark eyes, of a loving disposition.

EDITH A., NELLIE C., and ALICE L., three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Edith is tall, good-looking, dark. Nellie is fair, fond of home. Alice is fair, and of a loving disposition.

LIVELY ALICE and PRETTY POLLY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Alice is twenty-three, medium height, fair, domesticated. Polly is twenty-nine, domesticated dark, hazel eyes.

G. G. G., twenty-one, a mechanic, would like to correspond with a young lady. Respondent must be about twenty, domesticated.

TITO, twenty-five, fair, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

KATHLEEN, seventeen, light hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a gentleman with a moderate income.

HAPPY DINNY, twenty-one, a seaman in the Royal Navy, good-looking, loving, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady residing in or near London.

ELIZABETH, twenty, medium height, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

SUSIE and LOTTIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two dark gentlemen. Susie is twenty-six, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition. Lottie is twenty-two, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children, loving.

HAPPY CHARLIE and JOLLY BOB, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Both are good-looking, of medium height.

LILY B. and ANNIE R., two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Lily B. is twenty-five, of medium height, auburn hair, brown eyes, fond of music and dancing, thoroughly domesticated. Annie R. is seventeen, dark hair, blue eyes, good-looking, dark, fond of music and dancing, loving.

SISSEY, seventeen, brown hair, blue eyes, loving, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a gentleman in a good position.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

JAMES is responded to by—Nellie S., twenty-one, fair, tall, good-looking.

STRAUT JAC by—Nancy Lee, tall, dark, good-tempered, fond of children.

MEDICINE CHEST by—True Blue, medium height, brown hair and eyes, fond of home and music.

BINOCULAR by—The Lass that Loves a Sailor, tall, dark brown hair, blue eyes.

BOTTLE by—Polly.

ZULU WARRIOR by—Mildred, twenty, dark, fond of music and children.

WILLIAM by—Brunette, twenty, dark, good-tempered, fond of music.

JAMES by—Gipsy, twenty-one, tall, black hair and eyes, good-looking.

I. O. G. T. by—Ann, twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, good-looking; and by—Fanny, twenty-four, brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home.

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